A

RELATION

OF THE

DEATH

OF THE PRIMITIVE

PERSECUTORS.

Written originally in Latin by

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To which is prefixed a

DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

PERSECUTION.

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AMONG all the diſcoveries that have been made in this age, of the books that had been eſteemed loſt, there is none, ſince that of the Epiſtle of St. Clemens, that has been received with more joy than this of Lactantius's book of the *Death of the Perſecutors*, for which the world is beholden to the happy induſtry of the moſt learned Baluzius, who having found this treaſure, not only communicated it to the world, but enriched it with his learned notes: by which he has added a new eſſay, to the many that have already appeared, of his great ſincerity, his profound learning, and of his ſolid judgment: it has been, ſince that time, re-

printed at Oxford, with ſhorter notes: in which there are many happy conjectures made, both for ſupplying ſome of the words that were worn out of the manuſcript copy, and for correcting ſome paſſages, which the copier perhaps writ wrong, and it is upon that edition that this tranſlation is made.

The importance of this book will be eaſily apprehended, by thoſe who conſider that Lactantius was the politeſt writer of his time, in whom one finds ſomewhat very like Auguſtus's age revived; he had alſo particular opportunities of being well informed of his ſubject, by the poſt to which he was advanced in Conſtantine's court, of being his ſon's tutor. It is true, his eloquence carries him often into ſtrains that become an orator better than a hiſtorian: for he has a heat of ſtile, that ought not to be imitated by one that would write hiſtory. But he ſeems

to have deſigned this book to be a mixed ſort of writing, between a diſcourſe and a hiſtory; ſo that the figures that agree not to the one, may be allowed to the other.

The account that he gives of St. Peter's coming to Rome, cuts off the fable of his being there for five and twenty years: but if what he ſays of things at ſo great a diſtance from his own time, is not thought ſo authentical, and if his authority ſeems not ſtrong enough to cut off all thoſe perſecutions that are ſaid to have riſen between Domitian's reign and Decius's, ſince he repreſents all that interval as a time of a long peace to the Chriſtians; yet we muſt at leaſt ſuppoſe him to have been much better informed of that which fell out during the laſt perſecution; ſo that the beginning which he aſſigns to it cuts off all thoſe legends of martyrs that (as is pretended)

ſuffered before that year, and as we cannot doubt of the time in which he tells us the perſecution began, ſo no more ought we to call in queſtion the limits that he ſets to it; and therefore ſince he tells us, that Conſtance ordered only that the churches in which the Chriſtians held their aſſemblies ſhould be pulled down, and that he would not carry the perſecution further againſt the Chriſtians themſelves; and ſince he excepts the Gauls out of thoſe provinces that felt the fury of thoſe edicts, we ſee what a number of legends there are to be cut off. For the truth is, that very ſoon after this perſecution was over, ſome that loved either to make (or at leaſt to report) very tragical ſtories concerning it, ſeemed to give no bounds to their invention upon a ſubject that was fruitful enough of itſelf, and ſo needed not to have been ſwelled up by ſuch additions.

The deſtruction of the records that the Chriſtians kept, which were ſo carefully ſearched after during this perſecution, gave ſome colour for thoſe pretended diſcoveries; for it ſerved turn to give them credit to ſay, that ſuch relations had been preſerved from the ſearchers of thoſe inquiſitors, and ſo that they were by accident found out in ſome corner, where very probably thoſe that forged them both laid them and found them: and the matter would no doubt have been received with more credit, if ſome dream or viſion had been pretended, as that which had made the diſcovery. Of all thoſe legends none is more copious nor leſs credible than that of the Thebean legion, and that upon many accounts; but as the ſilence not only of Euſebius and Sulpitius Severus, but of all the other writers of the fourth century, gave a juſt prejudice againſt a ſtory

that begun not to appear till the middle of the fifth century; ſo the poſitive teſtimony of Lactantius, who excepts the Gauls from the perſecution, puts an end to the fable. For tho' he ſhews ſo great a diſpoſition to ſpeak well of Conſtance, that this may ſeem to leſſen the authority of one, who to make his court with the ſon would naturally raiſe the father's character; yet ſo remarkable a tranſaction as that was, could not have been ſuppreſt, with any ſort of decency, by one that muſt have certainly heard of it, if it was true.

The falſe appearance of a greatneſs of mind, that was inferred from Diocletian's reſigning the empire, is alſo taken off by this relation; ſince it is plain, that both Diocletian's brain was turned, and that he was forced to it; ſo that his reſignation was not the effect of his philoſophy, but of the un-

natural ambition of his ſon-in-law Maximian.

The ſubject of this diſcourſe, and the application to which a tranſlation of it tied me, together with the preſent ſcene of affairs, led my mind very naturally into more general thoughts. The characters of thoſe ancient perſecutors, ſuch as theſe, that they had delivered themſelves up to all the brutalities of ſenſual pleaſure, that they had ruined their ſubjects by ſevere impoſitions for maintaining vaſt armies, that they had, in their wars, ſhewed more care than was decent in preſerving themſelves out of all danger, that they were weak to the moſt exceſſive flatteries, the profuſeneſs of their expence in the raiſing of coſtly buildings, their great ſucceſs in a courſe of many years, their ſuperſtitious and fearful tempers, and to crown all, the cruelty that they practiſed in the perſecution, to which

they were uneaſily drawn, and in which they begun at firſt with requiring all to abjure, beſides many other particulars; all theſe, I ſay, inſenſibly carry ones thoughts to make parallels between ſome modern perſecutors and thoſe that are here ſet forth: but if the reſpect due to their ſublime character makes one drive away thoſe leſs decent ſallies of his mind, to which he is carried before he is aware, yet the importance of this matter leads to ſpeculations that are more general, and by conſequence leſs offenſive. And ſince the melancholy ſtate of things at preſent carried me, in thoſe intervals in which I diſcontinued the dry work of tranſlating, to conſider the grounds on which thoſe cruel and perſecuting doctrines and practices are founded, together with the motives from which they riſe, the characters that accompany them, and the effects that follow them;

I thought I might be forgiven a little if I took the liberty to ſwell up the bulk of this ſmall book with a preface of ſome length; in which my deſign is not only to expoſe this ill-natured principle, and to ſhew, that where-ever it is authoriſed, it is a more infallible mark of an antichriſtian church, than all the other characters are of an infallible church, to which thoſe pretend that have died themſelves ſo red in the blood of others; but likewiſe to form in the minds of thoſe who hate perſecution, perhaps only becauſe they either feel it, or are afraid of it, ſuch a notion of this matter as may preſerve them from falling into the ſame exceſſes, if a revolution in the ſtate of affairs ſhould put it in their power to uſe others as hardly as they have been uſed by them. It has been often obſerved, that tho' a plea for moderation is the ſanctuary of all the unfortunate,

yet their fortunes came no ſooner to be changed, but that they inſenſibly got into that principle which was ſo much decried by themſelves, when their affairs were in an ill condition: as if the only quarrel that they had to perſecution, was becauſe they had not the managing of it themſelves. I will treat this ſubject with all the cloſeneſs that the matter deſerves, or that I am capable of; and will avoid the ſerving up what I am to propoſe with the garniſhings of the fine ſayings of others: for as that would carry me too far, ſo a good reaſon is ſo much a better thing, than a round period, or a laboured ſentence, that the mind finds itſelf ſatisfied with the one, whereas the fancy is only pleaſed with the other.

All perſecution riſes out of an impatience of ſpirit, which makes a man leſs able to bear contradiction. There is a tyranny in moſt men's nature,

which makes them deſire to ſubdue all others by the ſtrength of their underſtandings: and ſuch men have an implacable hatred to all that do not render themſelves to their reaſons; and think that they are affronted when other men refuſe to ſubmit to them: ſo that he who would ſtrike at perſecution in its root, muſt begin here, and endeavour to ſoften men, eſpecially towards thoſe who differ from them in matters of religion. This imperious temper, when it works upon ſubjects of religion, finds ſomewhat to raiſe its ſpleen, that was of itſelf impetuous enough before: and that which is called fury and rage, when it is employed in other diſputes, comes to be called zeal, when it is turned towards the theories that relate to another world.

But when we conſider what a ſublime thing divine truth is, and what a poor low thing the mind of man is, we

ſhall ſee cauſe to blunt a little the edge of our ſpirits, if they are too ſharp in ſuch matters Man is much governed by fancy, and fancy follows the texture of the animal ſpirits, which renders many more capable of apprehending objects that are ſome way proportioned to them, and more diſpoſed to follow them; ſo that temper prepares men for ſome opinions, and prepoſſeſſes them againſt others. With the greater part of mankind, education is ſo powerful that they are ſcarce able ever to overcome it; and if education and temper have hit together, it will require a very extraordinary elevation to reſcue a man from their force. Men likewiſe receive with their impreſſions of religion ſuch a reſpect for them, as makes them look on every thought that calls them in queſtion as criminal: and when perſons are bred up to diſquiet themſelves with ſcruples, if they

have ſo much as made a doubt of their religion, it is not hard to ſee them adhere ſo firmly to the principles of their education, which ſtick ſo faſt to the worſt ſort of men, that even Atheiſts themſelves, after all the pains they take to get rid of them, cannot ſhake them off ſo entirely, but that they will be apt to return oft upon them. Men that think much, and that reaſon well, that are freed from the biaſs that intereſt, honour, kindred, and cuſtom do give them, and that have leiſure to examine matters carefully, may indeed get above all theſe: yet there are ſo few that can do this, and there are yet ſo much fewer that will do it; that it is rather a wonder to ſee ſo many change their perſuaſions, than to ſee ſo few do it. And indeed it is ſo ſublime a theory to think on God, and his attributes and works, or to think of another ſtate, and of the way that leads to it, that

till God furniſhes out a new miſſion of apoſtles, with a meaſure of thoſe extraordinary gifts which he poured out on the great Pentecoſt, it is not eaſy to imagine how the converſion of heathen nations ſhould be made. For tho' the idolatry of ſome of theſe is extreme groſs, yet their prieſts have ſuch ſymbolical ſignifications for all theſe rites, that they do much diminiſh the horror which is raiſed by the firſt ſight of them in the minds of ſtrangers; and ſince the chief grounds upon which we prove the Chriſtian religion, are taken from the prophecies in the Old Teſtament, and their accompliſhment in the New, from the evidence that was given concerning the miracles, the death, and the reſurrection of Chriſt, which we confirm from the collateral proofs of the ſtate of that time, of the writings of the enemies of this religion, and of that ſucceſſion of authors, that

in all the ages that have paſt ſince, have mentioned thoſe matters, and cited the books which we hold to be divine. All this is ſo evident, to thoſe who can make the enquiry, that it is ſtrange to find how any one can withſtand it; but to barbarians, who know nothing of it, and who have no way of informing themſelves concerning it, all this can ſignify nothing. So that in order to the convincing their underſtandings, (for I do not treat of God's ſecret methods in touching their conſciences) I do not ſee how we ſhould expect that they ſhould yield eaſily, unleſs there were a new power of working miracles conferred on thoſe who labour in this work And what noiſe ſoever the miſſionaries may make with their miracles, in thoſe remote parts, it is plain theſe are all impoſtures; for the moſt neceſſary of all other miracles for the converſion of ſtrange nations

being the gift of tongues, with which the apoſtles were ſo wonderfully furniſht at firſt, and ſince they are all forced to acknowledge that this is wanting to them, we have all poſſible reaſon to conclude that God would not change his methods, or qualify men to work wonders, and not give them that which is both the moſt ſenſible and the moſt uſeful of all others, towards that end for which he authoriſes them.

But to return from this digreſſion, a man is ſcarce the maſter of his own thoughts: habit, conſtitution, and other things do ſo concur that he cannot open his eyes to new objects, nor ſee them in a new light, other than that in which he has been accuſtomed to view them; and a man can no more change his notions of things, becauſe a ſet of new opinions would accommodate him better, than he can change the reliſh that his ſenſes, his ear, or

his taſte has in their objects; a man may prevaricate, but he ſtill thinks as he thinks; and cannot think otherwiſe, becauſe he would have himſelf do ſo: But if a man is not the maſter of his own mind, much leſs is any other man the maſter of it. No man has that ſuperiority over any other man's reaſon, as to expect that it ſhould always accommodate itſelf to his: and the ſevereſt exerciſe of tyranny muſt ſtill leave the thoughts at liberty: the forcing a man to ſay, or do otherwiſe than he thinks by threatnings, the execution of which is above his force to endure, is only the delivering over ſuch a perſon to the rack of his own conſcience here, and to all thoſe miſeries hereafter, which muſt be the portion of hypocrites, and of diſſemblers with God or man. Nor is there ſuch an infallible diſtinction in one man's nature from another, that the one is more like

to be in the right than the other: ſince therefore, among all thoſe that differ, ſome muſt be in the wrong, thoſe that have the power in their hands may poſſibly be of the wrong ſide, and in that caſe all their ſeverity is turned againſt the truth, and thoſe who believe it. And ſince God makes the ſun to ſhine, and the rain to fall on the juſt as well as the unjuſt, Gideon's reaſoning may be applied to this matter, 'if 'Baal is a god let him plead for himſelf;' and the force of Gamaliel's argument, that 'if it is of men, it will 'come to nought; and if it is of God, 'we muſt not fight againſt him.' As it ſilenced an aſſembly of very fierce perſecutors, ſo it is full as ſtrong now as it was then; for reaſon is eternal, and changeth not. It ſeems alſo plain, that thoſe actions which concern human ſociety belong indeed to the authority of the magiſtrate; but that our thoughts

with relation to God, and ſuch actions as ariſe out of thoſe thoughts, and in which others have no intereſt, are God's immediate province, and can belong to no other juriſdiction. God only knows our thoughts, as he alone can change them; ſo that a magiſtrate, by encroaching upon them, breaks in upon God's propriety, and upon that eſſential right of human nature, of worſhipping God according to our conviction, which is in us antecedent to all human government, and can never become ſubject to it.

But if the general theories from the nature of man, give a very favourable view of what is now advanced, the characters of the Chriſtian religion, and the many expreſs texts that are in it, ſhould determine this matter more poſitively. The religion revealed by Moſes conſiſted in temporal promiſes, an earthly Canaan, and all the

bleſſings of this life; ſo that ſince the Jews had all theſe things by virtue of that covenant, it was very reaſonable that a violation of that law ſhould infer a forfeiture of all thoſe rights that the Jews held by virtue of it; and therefore it was as juſt, that a Jew ſhould have been put to death for the violation of thoſe laws, as it is lawful for us to put a man to death that coins or clips money: yet as for opinions the caſe was different even among the Jews: and therefore, tho' the doctrines of the Sadducees ſtruck at the foundations of all religion, the Phariſees, when they had the upper hand, never carried the matter ſo far as to proceed to extremities againſt them. But what ſeverities ſoever might have agreed with the Moſaical diſpenſation, they ſeem to be all out of doors under the Chriſtian religion; which gives us no earthly Canaan, no temporal bleſſings, nor the

rules for civil ſociety: but having found the world in the poſſeſſion of their temporal rights, it only came to ſuperadd to thoſe the doctrines and rules of a divine diſcipline, upon which the happineſs or miſeries of another ſtate do depend. Now it ſeems to be an unconteſted rule in juſtice, that, in whatſoever ſociety one is engaged, the violation of the laws of that ſociety can only infer a forfeiture of all that one had or might have expected by virtue of it, but this cannot be carried ſo far, as to make one forfeit all that he holds by virtue of any other ſociety to which he belongs; and therefore, ſince we hold our temporal eſtates and liberties, not by virtue of our Chriſtianity, but as we are the members of the ſtate or kingdom to which we belong, or doing any thing that is only contrary to our religion, may well make us forfeit all that belongs to us by virtue of our

baptiſmal covenant; but this ought not to be carried ſo far as to cut off thoſe rights that we have antecedent to our Chriſtianity, as we are men, and the ſubjects of a civil government. Our Saviour confirmed all this by ſaying, that 'his kingdom was not of this world; 'that he came not to deſtroy, but to 'ſave;' and by giving this rule of juſtice, 'of doing to others that which 'we would have others do to us:' which would ſoon let all perſecutors ſee how differently they act to it: but above all, our Saviour has made the doctrines of meekneſs and charity ſuch main ingredients in his goſpel, that he has made them the characters by which his diſciples may be every where known; and this ſpirit of love is ſo diffuſed thro' the whole writings of the New Teſtament, that, how hard ſoever it may be to underſtand ſome of the other paſſages that are in them, yet there

is no ambiguity at all in thoſe that ſet this forth: we are not only reſtrained from ruining thoſe who differ from us, but we are required to love them, to bear with them, and to deal with them in the ſpirit of meekneſs: there are ſome of the epiſtles that do not mention ſeveral of the duties incumbent on Chriſtians, yet there is not one, how ſhort ſoever, in which this of love is not propoſed, in terms that are both ſtrong and tender; and while the church of Corinth was almoſt rent aſunder by a variety of opinions, and by the different parties that followed the ſeveral teachers that had been among them; St. Paul does not enter much into the grounds of their diſputes, but recommends love and charity to them in terms that ſhew how much he himſelf was inflamed while he writ them; and he is carried into all the raptures of a divine eloquence that ſo tranſporting a ſub-

ject could inſpire: St. John lived ſo long as to ſee a great deal of the firſt fervour of the Chriſtian religion ſlacken; but when he writ to revive that ſpirit, the argument upon which he dwells chiefly is to perſuade all to love one another, and he does that in the ſofteſt and moſt melting terms that can be imagined. The controverſy concerning the obligation that lay on the Gentiles for obeying the Moſaical law, was judged by the apoſtles againſt the Judaizers, and the inferences that depended on that controverſy were ſuch, that St. Paul ſhews they went ſo far as to make void the death of Chriſt; yet the ſame apoſtle is gentle to thoſe that, without ſeeing the extent of theſe conſequences, were carried away by thoſe Judaizers; ſo that he acknowledges, that in their obſerving them from a good motive they were acceptable to God; and that as the kingdom of God,

or the goſpel, conſiſted not in thoſe ſcrupulous diſtinctions of meats and of drinks, but 'in righteouſneſs, peace, 'and joy in the Holy Ghoſt;' ſo he adds, that every man was to endeavour to be fully perſuaded in his own mind, and was not to judge his brother in ſuch matters, but to leave him to the judgment of God. This way of managing a controverſy that was of ſuch importance, and that was maintained with ſo ſtiff an oppoſition, even to that extraordinary authority that was lodged in the apoſtles, ought to have been the meaſure upon which all the ſucceeding ages of the church ought to have formed themſelves; and when the apoſtles that had an infallible aſſiſtance, and ſo might have ſpoken in a ſtrain of a higher authority than any that have come after them, yet thought fit to treat of thoſe matters in ſuch an humble and ſoftening ſtile, thoſe who can-

not pretend to ſuch a direction ought not to take upon them to dictate, and to threaten and deſtroy thoſe who differ from them.

It is indeed an amazing thing to ſee how much the Chriſtian church has departed from that pattern: and when one conſiders the firſt beginnings of the Chriſtian and the Mahometan religion, he is not a little ſurpriſed to ſee the changes that have befallen both. The bleſſed Author of our holy religion, as he was a pattern for humility and charity, ſo he was made perfect through ſufferings: and his religion, as it contains precepts ſuitable to the example that he gave, which are ſet down in the plaineſt and moſt perſauding expreſſions poſſible, ſo it gained its firſt glory in the world, and obtained its chief triumphs over it by the meekneſs and gentleneſs, and the love and charity of thoſe who embraced it: on the con-

trary, the Mahometan religion began, in the perſon of that impoſtor, with all the fierceneſs of rage, and was carried on by the ſword, by which Mahomet pretended that he was ſent of God to convert the world. The nations that have received the Mahometan religion, are, by their conſtitution, rough and barbarous: and yet how ſhameful a reverſe of the firſt beginnings of the two religions is but too viſible to the world: the Mahometans in a courſe of ſeveral ages are ſo much ſoftened, that inſtead of that cruelty with which their religion appeared at firſt, they are now ſo gentle, that thoſe of a religion which believes theirs to be only an impoſture live ſecure under them, and know the price that the liberty of their conſcience muſt riſe to: and that being paid, they enjoy, in all other reſpects, the protection of the government, together with the public exerciſe of their reli-

gion: whereas, on the other hand, that part of the Chriſtian church that pretends the higheſt, has ſo far departed from the meekneſs of its Author, and of his firſt followers, that, notwithſtanding all the poliſhings of learning and civility that are in it, it is now the cruelleſt and the moſt implacable ſociety that has ever yet appeared in the world: if there were no other evidences but this ſingle one, it is enough to demonſtrate how much that body has departed from its firſt inſtitution: and if our Saviour has given us a ſhort abridgment of the character of the devil in theſe two qualities, that he is a liar and a murderer, then any body of men that has decreed 'that faith is not to 'be kept to heretics,' and that has alſo decreed 'the murder of ſo many inno-'cent perſons,' who have done nothing againſt that civil ſociety to which they belong, that deſerves a forfeiture of

their lives; ſuch a body, I ſay, if we may take our Saviour's character for a rule, looks more like the followers of that fallen ſpirit, than the body of which the Lamb of God is the head. And when we conſider the plain and expreſs words, in which the great duties of a holy life are delivered in ſcripture, but moſt particularly thoſe of love and charity, and the darkneſs that are in many other paſſages of which the meaning is more diſputable, it looks like an unaccountable perverſeneſs to ſee men who ſtill pretend to make that book their rule, yet to be ſo viſibly faulty in executing the one, and ſo exceſſively ſevere in impoſing the other, of which I ſhall content myſelf to give one ſingle inſtance.

Pope Leo the tenth, in the reformation that he ſet out with the concurrence of the Lateran council, ordered a ſevere proſecution to be made of all

heretics, and that all the laws againſt them ſhould be put in execution: but at the ſame time, he ordered ſuch ſlight puniſhment againſt thoſe that ſhould willfully and publicly blaſpheme God and Chriſt, even though they relapſed in it over and over again, that it is plain he had no mind to deter men with too much ſeverity from the practice of that which was ſo common in his own court: a ſmall fine, or the forfeiture of the profits of a benefice, is all the puniſhment that he laid on the one, even when clergymen relapſed in it. This may ſerve to ſhew, that tho' naturally one is apt to think blaſphemy a much more heinous crime than hereſy, yet a Pope, together with a council, which they pretend was general, made a diſtinction in the puniſhing of them, which is very little for their honour.

The Chriſtians did, during the firſt

ages, declare highly againſt all cruelty on the account of a difference of perſuaſion in matters of religion: and tho' their intereſt naturally led them to this, yet we paſs a very hard judgment on thoſe times, if we think that they were only of that mind becauſe the power was then in the hands of their enemies. When the empire turned Chriſtian, the very Heathen worſhip was not only tolerated, for above a whole age together, but the Heathens themſelves continued to be in the chief employments of the empire, and it is pleaſant to ſee how the Heathens, that had ſo long perſecuted the Chriſtians, and that had contrived the ſevereſt of all the perſecutions under Julian, which very probably had been put in execution if he had returned victorious from his Perſian expedition, ſaw the ſtate of things no ſooner altered, than they began to employ all their eloquence in

the behalf of toleration; as if liberty of conſcience had been an eſſential right of mankind, from which they ought never to be cut off: and they carried this ſo far, as to pretend that a difference in religion tends more to the honour of God, than a uniformity in it could do: and ſo they fancied, that a variety in it was acceptable to God.

The firſt ſeverity that Chriſtians practiſed upon one another, was the baniſhing of Arius, and a few of his followers: it muſt be acknowledged, that this ſeems to be the utmoſt extent of civil authority in thoſe matters: for certainly a government may put ſuch perſons out of its protection that are enemies to its peace, and ſo baniſh them upon great occaſions, giving them leave to ſell their eſtates, and to carry away with them all that belongs to them; yet this being all that any human government can claim, it ought not to be

applied too easily nor rashly, till it is visible that all other remedies are ineffectual, and that the public safety can be no other way secured: but though this severity against Arius had no great effects, yet the Arians had no sooner the power in their hands than they put in practice, first, all the contrivances of craft and fraud, together with many less crying violences, under Constance, and they carried this afterwards to a more open persecution under Valens: and after that, both in Spain and Afric, it appeared, that a cruel spirit was so inherent in that party that it shewed itself as oft as ever they had it in their power: but while Valens persecuted in his division of the empire, it is observed, that Valentinian his brother thought it was enough to support the orthodox, without persecuting the other; Gratian carried the matter further, and tolerated both almost equally. And in

the happy turn under Theodosius, at what pains was S. Gregory Nazianzene to restrain the orthodox from retaliating upon the Arians the ill treatment that they had suffered from them: and not only the Novatians, but even the Arians, continued to have their churches in the imperial cities. The first instance of the employing the secular arm against heretics, that was set on by any of the orthodox, was under the reign of that bloody tyrant Maximus, and it was managed by two such scandalous bishops that their ill lives is no small prejudice against every thing that was carried on by such instruments. This was condemned by the best bishops of that age, and the ill effects of that severity are very copiously marked by the historian. One is unwilling, for the sake of those ages, to reflect on the rigour that appears on some laws that are in the Code; yet the mild behavi-

our of Atticus, Proclus, and ſome other biſhops, is marked with the praiſes that were due to it: and it is probable, that thoſe laws were rather made to terrify, than that they ſhould be executed.

The Donatiſts, after a conteſt of above 120 years continuance, that was managed at firſt more gently, grew at laſt ſo fierce and intolerable, that not being contented with their own churches, they broke in upon the churches of thoſe of the unity, and committed many outrages on the perſons of ſome of the biſhops, putting out the eyes of ſome, and leaving others for dead: the biſhops upon that conſulted, whether they ought to demand not only the Emperour's protection, but the application of the laws made againſt heretics to the Donatiſts. S. Auſtin and ſome biſhops oppoſed this for ſome time; but they yielded at laſt: and theſe laws were ſo ſeverely executed, that not only the Donatiſts them-

ſelves complained heavily of them, but S. Auſtin in ſeveral letters that he writ to the magiſtrates upon this occaſion, made the ſame complaints; he interceded very earneſtly for the Donatiſts, and ſaid, that 'it detracted much from 'the glory of the church, that had re-'ceived ſo much honour from the ſuf-'ferings of the martyrs, to ſee others 'ſuffer upon the account of the church:' and he told them plainly, that 'if they 'did not proceed more moderately, the 'biſhops would ſuffer all that could 'come upon them from the rage of the 'Donatiſts, rather than complain any 'more to thoſe who acted ſo rigorouſ-'ly.' Yet tho' S. Auſtin condemn'd the exceſſes of the civil magiſtrates in ſome particulars, he ſet himſelf to juſtify ſeverity in general, when it was employed upon the account of religion, and all the moderate pleadings for liberty, that are to be found either in Tertullian,

Cyprian, and more copiouſly in our author Lactantius, with relation to heathens, and the like reaſonings that are to be found in Athanaſius, Hilary, and Lucifer, with relation to the perſecutions of the Arians, were in a great meaſure forgot; S. Auſtin had a heat of imagination, that was very copious, which way ſoever he turned it: and this was employed chiefly in allegoriſing ſcripture, ſo as to bring together a vaſt number of proofs for every cauſe that he undertook; without troubling himſelf to examine critically what the true meaning of thoſe paſſages might be: and he is ſo apt to run out in all his reaſonings into exceſſive amplifications, and into all the figures of copious and uncorrect eloquence, that it is no wonder to find that paſſage of our Saviour in the parable, 'compel them to enter 'in,' with ſome other places miſapplied on this occaſion.

With that Father the learning of the Weſtern Church fell very low, ſo that his works came to be more read in the ſucceeding ages, than the writings of all the other Fathers: and in this, as in other things, men that knew not how to reaſon themſelves, contented themſelves with that lazy and cheap way of copying from him, and of depending on his authority. The incurſion of the northern nations, that overthrew the Roman empire, and thoſe poliſhings of learning and civility that fell with it, brought on a night of ignorance, that can ſcarce be apprehended, by thoſe who have not read the writings of the following ages: ſuperſtition grew upon the ruins of learning, and eat up all. The fierce tempers of the northern people being muffled up in ignorance, and wrought on by ſuperſtition, were eaſily leavened with cruelty: perhaps the holy wars, and what they obſerved in the

rage as well as in the ſucceſſes of the Saracens, heightened this further: at laſt hereſy came to be reckoned the greateſt of all crimes; and as it condemned men to everlaſting burning, ſo it was thought that thoſe might be well anticipated by temporary ones of the inquiſitors kindling. It is true, the church pretended that ſhe would ſhed no blood: but all this was inſufferable juggling: for the churchmen declared who were obſtinate or relapſed heretics; and the ſecular arm was required to be ever in readineſs to execute their ſentence. This was not only claimed by the biſhops, but it was made a part of their oath at their conſecration, 'that they ſhould 'oppoſe and perſecute heretics to the 'utmoſt of their power:' nor were they contented to proceed by the common rules of juſtice, upon accuſations and witneſſes; but all forms were ſuperceded, and they by virtue of their paſto-

ral authority, (as if that had been given them to worry their ſheep, and not to feed them) objected articles to their priſoners upon ſuſpicion, and required them to purge themſelves of them by oath: and becauſe biſhops were not perhaps all ſo equally zealous and cruel, ſome of them being perſons of great quality, ſo that ſome remnants of a generous education, and of their lay pity, might ſtill hang about them; that bloody man Dominick took this work to task, and his order has ever ſince furniſhed the world with a ſet of inquiſitors, compared to whom all that had ever dealt in tortures in any former times were but bunglers.

So far has this melancholy ſpeculation of the degeneracy of the church of Rome carried me: they at laſt came to extol a zeal againſt hereſy as the higheſt act of piety towards God: and ſince hereſy is reckoned by S. Paul among

'the works of the fleſh,' it ſeemed as juſt to puniſh it in the ſevereſt manner, as it was to puniſh any of the other works of the fleſh: and ſince all heretics, were looked on as perſons damned, all tenderneſs towards them, and pity for them, was as far extinguiſhed as it was poſſible. For a falſe religion will not eaſily have the better of good nature ſo entirely, as to root it quite out; tho' it muſt be acknowledged that the Roman religion has done more towards that, than any other that has ever yet appeared in the world. All the room that was left for good nature, was the favourable definition that was given of hereſy: by which obſtinacy was made its peculiar character, that diſtinguiſhed it from error, which lies in a more innocent miſtake concerning divine matters: and as many have explain'd this obſtinacy, it amounts to a continuing in error after one is convinced of it. This

notion of hereſy, which has been received by many of the greateſt men even in the church of Rome itſelf, ſeems to agree well with that of S. Paul's ranking hereſy among the works of the fleſh; for if it is meerly a miſtake in the judgment, in which one continues, becauſe he cannot overcome his perſuaſion, nor ſee reaſons that are ſtrong enough to oblige him to change his mind, ſuch an adhering to error may be called any thing rather than a work of the fleſh: but if a man from a principle of intereſt, pride, or diſcontent, either throws himſelf into ill opinions, or continues in them after his mind is better enlightned, ſo that he ſtifles and denies that inward conviction, then the reaſon is very plain, why ſuch an ill temper of mind ſhould be reckoned a work of the fleſh, becauſe it plainly ariſes out of a depraved nature.

I will not here enter into ſo trouble-

ſome an enquiry as it would be, to examine how far an erroneous conſcience acquits one before God; for that muſt be left to him, who will judge every man according to his works, and who beſt knows how far he will accept of a general repentance of unknown ſins, and of a general act of faith, even of truths that are yet unknown; but as for the judgments of men, certainly when the other parts of ones life make it clear, not only to a judgment of charity, but even to that of diſcretion, that he is ſincere, and that he means well, it is hard to know when he is obſtinate, and when his errors become hereſies, that is to ſay, works of the fleſh.

So far have I been led upon the conſideration of the ſpirit of perſecution, that is not only warranted by cuſtom, and a long continued practice; but is by the authority not only of popes, but even of general councils, eſtabliſhed in-

to a law in the church of Rome. I am carried next into a ſcene of thoughts that are more particularly ſuted to the doctrines of the reformed churches: and here it muſt be acknowledged, that perſecution is a more juſtifiable thing according to the principles of the church of Rome, than it is according to our tenets; for the church of Rome that pretends to be infallible, has a better right to demand a blind ſubmiſſion from all its ſubjects, and to treat thoſe roughly who refuſe to grant it, than a church that pretends to nothing but a power of order and government; and that confeſſes ſhe may be miſtaken. Our being ſubject to error, is unreaſonably urged, when men would carry it ſo far as to make us doubt of all things: yet it ought at leaſt to have this effect on us, as to keep us from being too ready to judge hardly of thoſe who are of another mind, or to uſe them roughly for it;

ſince it is poſſible, that they may be in the right, and that we may be miſtaken; at leaſt, they may have very probable reaſons for their opinions, which if they do not quite juſtify their miſtakes, yet do very much excuſe and leſſen them. It is likewiſe viſible, that all ſevere proceedings upon the diverſity of opinions, how effectual ſoever they may be on baſe-minded men, who will always make ſhipwrack of a good conſcience, when it comes in competition with the 'love 'of this preſent world,' yet work quite contrariwiſe on men of awakened underſtandings and generous ſouls; inſtead of gaining on ſuch perſons, theſe inſpire them with horror at a ſort of men who go about to ruin companies of people, that never did them hurt. It is from this, that thoſe violent hatreds ariſe among men of different perſuaſions. Every man is not capable to underſtand an argument, or to be much diſturbed

at it: and tho' divines, that carry their ſpeculations further into the conſequenees of opinions, whether real or imaginary, grow hot and angry at one another upon thoſe heads, yet the people underſtand them little, and feel them leſs: but every man feels an injury, and nature makes her inferences very quick upon it: and concludes, that 'thoſe who 'uſe us ill, hate us:' and there muſt be a great degree of regeneration to keep men from hating thoſe that hate them: upon this ariſes all the animoſity that is among the ſeveral parties: for every one reckoning himſelf a member of that body to which he aſſociates himſelf, thinks that he is obliged to reſent all the injuries that are done to his fellow-members, as much as if they were done to himſelf in particular: and by the ſame natural logic, he caſts the guilt of the wrongs done his own party, not only on thoſe individuals of the other party,

from whom they did more immediately ariſe, but upon the whole body of them: and ſo here a war is kindled in mens breaſts, and when that is once formed within, it will find ſome unhappy occaſion or other to give itſelf a vent. Thoſe who are ill uſed, are in a ſtate, like that of a maſs of humours in the body, which rowl about leſs perceived, till ſome unlucky accident has weakned any part of it; and then they will all diſcharge themſelves on the part that ſuffers. Men that are uneaſie, naturally love changes: for theſe are like the ſhifting of poſtures, they give ſome preſent eaſe, and they flatter the patient with the hope of more to follow. The advice that the old man of Samnium ſent his ſon, was certainly very wiſe; he had intercepted the whole Roman army in the hills, ſhutting up the paſſages ſo that they could neither go backward nor forward: the father adviſed him

firſt to diſmiſs them all without any injury, ſince that would probably oblige the Romans; or if that were not followed, to cut them all off; for that would weaken them conſiderably: whereas the middle method, which the General took, of letting them all go, having firſt put a public affront on them, enraged the Romans without weakening them. According to this advice it ſeems evident, that all conſiderable bodies of men, that are in any ſtate, are to be ſet at eaſe, or to be quite rooted out; and there is nothing wiſe in this ſevere method, but an extreme and an unrelenting perſecution, and in this point, if the church of Rome has forgot the innocence of the dove, yet it muſt be confeſſed, that ſhe has retained the wiſdom of the ſerpent.

Perſecution is not only hurtful to thoſe that ſuffer many hard things by it, but is likewiſe miſchievous to them,

by the averſion that it inſpires in them to thoſe at whoſe hands they ſuffer, by the ill habit of mind into which it throws them, and by thoſe violent projects and convulſions which do very naturally come into the heads of thoſe, who as they feel much, ſo they fear yet more.

Thoſe that do perſecute, tho' they ſeem to triumph for a while, with the ſpoils of their enemies; yet will ſoon feel how this ſinks their credit extremely among thoſe that were more indifferent ſpectators, while the debate was managed with the pen or tongue; but they will certainly take part at leaſt in their compaſſions with the miſerable; and will be diſpoſed to think ill, not only of thoſe men that are heavy upon their harmleſs neighbours, but even of the cauſe itſelf, that is ſupported by ſuch methods.

The multitude even of the loweſt order of men has a remnant of good

nature left, which ſhews itſelf in the ſad looks that all put on at the executions even of malefactors: but if a falſe religion has not quite extinguiſhed humanity in its votaries, this will make a more ſenſible impreſſion, when men that have done nothing amiſs, and are only in fault becauſe they cannot help thinking as they do, are made ſacrifices to the rage of others, that perhaps have little more to ſay for themſelves, but that they are in poſſeſſion of the law; which in the next revolution of affairs that may fall out, will be an argument ſo much the ſtronger for uſing themſelves in the ſame manner, becauſe it is a juſt retaliation on them for that which they made others to ſuffer.

The men of perſecution do alſo naturally engage themſelves into the intrigues of courts, and all the factions of parties: they enter into dependances upon miniſters of ſtate, who drive them

on to execute all their paſſions, and to ſerve all their ends: and who have too good underſtandings themſelves not to laugh at the officious forwardneſs of thoſe who are perhaps more eager than is intended, in the doing of that for which thoſe very perſons, whoſe blind inſtruments they are at one time, will reproach them at another.

In ſhort, perſecution does extremely vitiate the morals of the party that manages it. The worſt men, ſo they are furious and violent, are not only connived at, but are even courted: and men otherwiſe of ſeverer morals, will inſenſibly ſlacken, by reaſon of their engagements with vicious men, whom they will find themſelves forced to cheriſh and employ: and if thoſe who have perſecuted others, fall under a reverſe of fortune, and come to ſuffer themſelves a little of that which they made others feel, as their ill behaviour will deprive

them in a great meaſure, of thoſe compaſſions that would otherwiſe work towards them, ſo it will raiſe within them many uneaſie reflexions upon their own actings, which will prove but melancholy companions to them in their afflictions: and theſe will force them to conclude, that becauſe they ſhewed no mercy, therefore they now meet with the requital of judgment without mercy; which how unjuſt ſoever it may be, in thoſe by whom they ſuffer, yet they will find it meet to look up to God, and to confeſs, 'that juſt and righteous are 'all his ways:' and it may be reaſonably apprehended, that it may have contributed not a little to fill up the meaſure of the ſins of a church, and to bring down ſevere ſtrokes upon them, when the viſible danger, which was apparent from a formidable enemy, could not turn their thoughts to that ſide, but that inſtead of uſing legal and juſt pre-

cautions for their own ſecurity, they let themſelves looſe to all the rages of a mad proſecution of ſome poor undiſcreet and deluded people; and all this to gratify their own revenges, or to inſinuate themſelves into the favours of thoſe who do now juſtly laugh at them, when the turn that they intended is ſerved by their means: and thoſe who would prepare themſelves for thoſe hard things which they have reaſon to expect from 'a church that has always 'delighted to bath herſelf in blood,' ought ſeriouſly to profeſs their repentance of this fury in inſtances that may be as viſible and edifying as their rage has been public and deſtructive.

But there remains yet one point, without which I am ſenſible that this diſcourſe will appear defective; I know it is extreme tender in our preſent circumſtances, yet that does not defer me from venturing on it; it is, 'How far

'proteſtants ought to tolerate papiſts.' It ſeems at firſt view the moſt unreaſonable thing in the world, for thoſe to pretend to it, who we are ſure muſt deſtroy us, as ſoon as it is in their power to do it. I ſay, they muſt do it; ſince by thoſe councils, which they themſelves hold to be general, the extirpation of heretics, and the breaking of faith to them, has been ſo formally decreed, that it is a fooliſh piece of preſumption to imagine that they can ever lay down thoſe principles. Infallibility is the bottom upon which their church is built, and ſhe muſt be as infallible in the rules that ſhe gives of morality, as ſhe is in her deciſions in points of faith: for all the reaſons that are given for private perſons depending on the church for the rule of their faith, do bind as ſtrongly to depend likewiſe on the church for the rule of life and manners. If we are in danger of forget-

ting, what was decreed in that church ſo long ago, they take pains from time to time to refreſh our memories, not only by their cruelties in the laſt age, for which there was ſo much more to be ſaid, than for later barbarities, becauſe the reformation was lookt on as a revolt then made from eſtabliſhed laws: and if perſecution can be at any time excuſed, it is in the firſt beginnings of hereſies, before the evil has ſpread itſelf into greater numbers of men: the heats that were raiſed in the firſt formation of that breach, may ſome way take off from the guilt of the ſacrifices that they made: for men in the firſt ſurpriſes of anger do ſeldom reaſon true, or act wiſely; but when a whole age has paſſed, and thoſe firſt heats are in a great meaſure laid, and when all the ſecurities that could poſſibly be demanded have been given, and while theſe have been enacted into the moſt

obligatory laws that could be contrived, which were confirmed by ſolemn oaths; and while the perſons ſo ſecured had not given the leaſt pretence to their enemies to ſay, that they had forfeited thoſe rights by any ill behaviour of theirs; yet the breach of faith, and the rage of perſecution, that we ſee before our eyes, both in France and Piedmont, are things that do not only raiſe an indignation in human nature, that cannot be well governed, without a very extraordinary meaſure of grace, but they offer even to our reaſons, arguments againſt all lenity towards them, that are very hard to be reſiſted: and it is certain, that all the regulars, and chiefly the Jeſuites, are ſo poſſeſſed with thoſe maxims, and with that temper, that it is a degree of credulity ſcarce to be reconciled to common prudence, to fancy, that ever they can change their natures. Thoſe notions are infuſed in them with

their firſt education; they are reſtleſs by their tempers; they are dedicated not only to their church, but to their order; from which they can expect no diſtinction, but by their activity and fierceneſs: they are taught to hate us, and to purſue our ruin by all methods poſſible, and they have receipts for the greateſt ſins if the penitent will come up to their price; and the pardon of ſin will be thought a good pennyworth, when it is to be purchaſed by the deſtruction of heretics. I know the Jeſuites ſtudy to perſuade the world, and that they have infuſed it into a great prince, that P. de la Chaiſe has had no hand in the violences now on foot in France, but that he has oppoſed them, and ſo they throw them entirely on the Archbiſhop of Paris, and on a lady that is now in great credit: ſo ready are they to ſacrifice the reputation even of their chief patrons, when it may ſerve their

turn to deceive others: but the contrary of this is ſo evident, that it is a new diſcovery of the impudence of that ſort of men. Yet after all this, and after all that can be ſaid from thoſe principles, that ſubject them to a foreign juriſdiction, and that veſt the Pope with a power of depoſing heretical princes, where I acknowledge the inferences are ſo juſt as well as ſo ſevere, that I know not how to anſwer them well to myſelf; yet the body of the people, that are bred up to the other points of popery, and that know nothing of theſe, which their prieſts keep as myſteries from them, and either deny them quite, or diſguiſe them ſo that they ſhew in other colours to thoſe who believe implicitly, and who do not give themſelves the trouble to enquire into ſuch matters; but think it is ſafer, as well as eaſier, to take things upon truſt; they I ſay, are not ſo formidable as to raiſe our fears and jealou-

ſies to ſo high a pitch: and ſecular prieſts are naturally a ſofter ſort of men, who have not the fourneſs that ſeems to belong to all the orders that are among them; nor are they ſo far poſſeſſed with the ill-natured and dangerous opinions that belong to that church, as to be paſt cure: and as a ſoftning of rigour towards ſuch, would lay the apprehenſions that ſelf-preſervation does naturally raiſe in all people, ſo it would at leaſt make the utmoſt degree of ſeverity, that ſeems reconcilable to the common principles of human ſociety, or of Chriſtianity, appear more juſtifiable, if a reſtleſsneſs under ſuch eaſie circumſtances ſhould afterwards drive a government to it. But the returning of the ſeverities that our brethren have ſuffered at the hands of the men of that religion on the papiſts of England, is a practice ſo contrary to

the Chriſtian religion, and to the principles of the proteſtant religion, that I do not ſtick to ſay it, that I had rather ſee the church of England fall under a very ſevere perſecution from the church of Rome, than ſee it fall to perſecute papiſts, when it ſhould come to its turn to be able to do it. The former will only ſerve to unite us among ourſelves, and to purge us from our droſs; and in particular from any of the leaven of the doctrine of perſecution, that we have not yet quite thrown out; but the other would very much ſtain the pureſt and beſt conſtituted church in the world; and it would be too near an approach to the cruelty of that church, which we cannot enough deteſt: but how much ſoever we muſt hate their corruption, we muſt ſtill remember, that they are men and Chriſtians, tho' perhaps of a courſe grain,

and that we ourſelves are reformed Chriſtians, who in imitation of our bleſſed Maſter, muſt not 'render evil 'for evil, but overcome evil with 'good.'

GILBERT BURNET.

THE PERSECUTORS

Here mentioned, whom the Judgments of God did ſo viſibly purſue and overtake, and whoſe Deaths were ſo ſignally remarkable, are in order thus.

NERO.
DOMITIAN.
DECIUS.
VALERIAN.
AURELIAN.
DIOCLETIAN.
MAXIMIAN, ſurnamed the HERCULIAN.
GALERIUS MAXIMIAN.
SEVERUS.
DAIA or DAZA, to whom GALERIUS MAXIMIAN gave the name of MAXIMIN, ſo that he was thereafter ſtiled MAXIMINUS DAZA, or ſimply MAXIMIN.
MAXENTIUS, the Son of MAXIMIAN the HERCULIAN.

A RELATION OF THE DEATH OF THE PRIMITIVE PERSECUTORS.

Written by

LUCIUS CÆCILIUS FIRMIANUS LACTANTIUS;

Addreſſed to DONATUS the Confeſſor.

I. GOD has at laſt heard you (my deareſt Donatus) in thoſe prayers which you offer up daily to him, as well as our other brethren, who by the virtue of their faith, and of the glorious confeſſion that they have made, have acquired to themſelves an eternal crown of glory. To theſe prayers God has hearkened; and has delivered us

from our enemies: and a bleſſed peace being now again re-eſtabliſhed upon earth, the church of God, that was lately laid ſo low, begins to flouriſh again: and thro' the mercy of God, his houſe, that was laid in ruins by his enemies, is now rebuilt with a new magnificence. God has raiſed up to us princes, who have repealed all the wicked and bloody edicts of the late tyrants; and have ſo ſettled the peace of mankind, that inſtead of the clouds and ſtorms of the late times, there is now an univerſal calm every where: and after all thoſe hurricanes of fury and violence are now blown over, we enjoy a ſerene air, and the happy quiet which we had ſo much long'd for. Now God's anger is turned away, and he hearkening to the prayers of his ſervants, has by the interpoſition of his divine aid, raiſed up their afflicted and broken ſpirits: now he has wiped away all their tears, and

has put an end to the conſpiracies of their enemies. Thoſe who had ſet themſelves in oppoſition to God, are now laid in the duſt: thoſe who had raſed the temples of God, are now become ſpectacles to the world; and they who had exerciſed ſo much cruelty on the ſervants of God, have received at his hands a ſevere return of their rage, and have breathed out their defiled ſouls after they had undergone a great many diſmal ſtrokes, that were laid on them by the hand of God. Their puniſhment was for ſome time delayed, but at laſt it was ſignal: and in them all ſucceeding ages ought to obſerve the juſtice of God in puniſhing ſuch proud and impious perſecutors ſuteably to their crimes. In the manner of their death, God calls likewiſe on all at what diſtance ſoever, either of time or place, to obſerve the greatneſs and majeſty of his providence in deſtroying the ene-

mies of his truth. And this will appear yet more evident to us, if we call to mind who have been the perſecutors of the church from its firſt beginning, and if we obſerve the ſeverity of the divine juſtice, that has appeared in their puniſhment.

II. Towards the end of Tiberius's reign, in the conſulate of the two Gemini, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt was crucified by the Jews on the 23d of March. He roſe again on the third day, and brought together his diſciples, whom the fear of his ſufferings was beginning to diſperſe, and he continued with them for the ſpace of forty days on earth, opening their hearts, and expounding the ſcriptures to them, which till then had appeared dark and involved. He ordained and inſtructed them to go and preach this new doctrine over the world; and he left them a ſcheme for their conduct, and for the government of this

new diſpenſation. When he had finiſhed his miniſtry, a cloud received him, and carried him up into heaven: and then his eleven diſciples having aſſumed into their number Matthias and Paul, diſperſed themſelves over the world for the preaching of the goſpel, as their maſter had commanded them: and during the ſpace of twenty five years, till the beginnings of Nero's reign, they continued founding many churches in a great many different cities and provinces. During Nero's reign, S. Peter came to Rome, and made a great many converts there, having thro' the power of God, that reſted on him, wrought ſeveral miracles, and ſo he formed a church in this place of empire. This was brought to Nero's ears, who finding that great multitudes, not only in Rome, but in all other places, were daily falling off from idolatry, and were turning to this new religion, and being

carried by his brutal tyranny to all ſorts of cruelty, he ſet himſelf firſt of all to deſtroy this religion, and to perſecute the ſervants of God: ſo he both ordered S. Peter to be crucified, and S. Paul to be beheaded. But he did not eſcape unpuniſhed: for God had regard to the ſufferings of his people. The tyrant, as he was diſpoſſeſſed of the empire, ſo he diſappeared all of the ſudden, nor is there ſo much as the leaſt remembrance left of the burial place of that brutal prince. But ſome have from hence taken up a very fooliſh imagination, of his being tranſlated, and of his being preſerved alive in ſome other region; which they found on ſome words of the Sybil, that mentions a murderer of his mother that had fled away, but that ſhould return again: and they fancy, that as he was the firſt who perſecuted the Chriſtians, ſo he ſhall be likewiſe the laſt of their perſecu-

tors; and that he is to appear again immediately before the coming of Antichriſt: and they judge (tho' very unreaſonably) that as there were two of the antient prophets who were tranſlated, and who before the laſt revolution of time are to appear as the forerunners of Chriſt, when he is to come again, accompanied with his ſaints, to begin his holy and endleſs reign; ſo likewiſe that Nero ſhall appear as the fore-runner of the devil, who muſt make way to him who is to bring a ſtrange deſolation upon earth, and a deſtruction upon all mankind.

III. After Nero, and the interval of ſome few more years, there aroſe another tyrant, Domitian, not much inferior to him: who though he acted in a moſt tyrannical and arbitrary manner, being heavy to his people, and no leſs hated by them, yet he reigned in peace and ſafety for ſeveral years, till he be-

gan to ſet himſelf againſt God. But as ſoon as he was ſet on by the inſtigation of the devil to perſecute the holy ſeed, then was he delivered up to the hands of his enemies. Nor was his being ſtabbed thought puniſhment enough for his crimes, but care was taken that no memory ſhould be left of him to poſterity; for though he had raiſed many magnificent buildings, and that there were many monuments of his empire, both in the capitol and in other places, yet the ſenate did expreſs ſuch a deteſtation of him, that they ordered that there ſhould remain no ſtatue for him, nor ſo much as the traces of any inſcription that made mention of his name: and by a moſt ſevere decree, which they paſt for this effect, they branded his memory with eternal infamy. Thus all the acts and edicts of this tyrant being repealed, the church did not only recover its former quiet, but became

much more flouriſhing under a ſucceſſion of many worthy princes, who as they governed the Roman empire very happily, ſo the church ſuffered no hardſhips under them: and ſhe being thus freed from the rage of her enemies, dilated herſelf both in the eaſtern and weſtern parts, ſo that there was no corner of the world ſo remote, nor any nation of it ſo wild, that was not viſited by this divine light, and that was not tamed by its diſcipline. But this long peace came at laſt to an end.

IV. For after many years the execrable Decius perſecuted the church, and who but ſo vile a man would have ſet himſelf againſt ſo holy a doctrine. It ſeems he was raiſed up to the imperial dignity for this very end, that as ſoon as he began to rage againſt God, he might be immediately thrown down: for having marched againſt the Carpi, who had poſſeſſed themſelves of Dacia

and Moeſia, he was ſurrounded by the barbarians, and both he and a great part of his army was cut off: nor had he ſo much as the honours of a funeral, but as well became one that had ſet himſelf againſt God, his carcaſs was expoſed as a prey to the beaſts of the earth, and to the fowls of the air.

V. Not long after Decius the emperour, Valerian was enflamed with the like rage, and ſtretched forth his hands againſt God. In a very little while he ſhed a great deal of the blood of the ſaints; but God plagued him with a new and unuſual ſort of judgment; and in his perſon there was a new remembrance left to poſterity of God's ſeverity in puniſhing his enemies according to their merit. He was taken priſoner by the Perſians, and ſo he not only loſt the empire, which he had governed ſo inſolently, but as he had robbed many others of their liberty, ſo he likewiſe

loſt his own at laſt, and fell under a moſt infamous ſlavery. For as oft as Sapores the king of Perſia, who took him, had occaſion either to mount on horſe-back, or to go into his chariot, he made the Roman emperor ſtoop down, that he might make his back his ſtep to get up; and whereas the Romans had made ſome repreſentations of the Perſians being defeated by them, Sapores uſed to rally Valerian, and to tell him, that the poſture in which he lay, was a more real proof to ſhew on whoſe ſide the victory went, than all the pictures that the Romans could make. Valerian being thus led about in triumph, lived for ſome time, ſo that the barbarians had in him occaſion given for a great while, to treat the very name of a Roman with all poſſible indignity and ſcorn. And this was the heightning of his miſery, that tho' he

had a ſon, upon whom the empire had devolved by his misfortune, yet no care was taken by the ſon either to reſcue the Father, or to revenge his ill uſage. After he had ended his infamous life, his skin was ſtead off his body, and both it and his guts being tinctured with a red colouring, they were hung up in one of the temples of the Perſian gods, to be a perpetual remembrance of ſo remarkable a triumph, by which they might always put ſuch Roman ambaſſadors as ſhould be ſent among them in mind of it, and from ſo unuſual a ſight, warn them not to preſume too much upon their own ſtrength, but to remember Valerian's fall. But how ſtrange a thing was it to find, that notwithſtanding ſuch remarkable judgments of God upon former perſecutors there ſhould ariſe any that ſhould dare ſo much as to project, much more

to re-act, ſuch crimes againſt the majeſty of that God, that ſupports and governs all things.

VI. Aurelian, that was naturally violent and furious, ſeemed to forget what had befallen Valerian, or if he remembred his captivity, he did not ſeem to reflect on his crimes, or to conſider that as the puniſhment of them, and ſo he likewiſe drew down the divine diſpleaſure on himſelf by his cruelty: but he lived not long enough to execute what he had deſigned, and he ended his days in the beginnings of his rage. For before his edict againſt the Chriſtians was ſent over all the provinces of the empire, he himſelf was killed at Coenophrurium, a town in Thrace, by ſome of his own domeſtics, upon ſome ill-grounded ſuſpicions that they had conceived of him. It might have been expected, that the ſucceeding Emperors ſhould have been reſtrained by

ſo many and ſuch ſignal examples: but they were ſo far from being terrified by them, that they acted yet with a more daring boldneſs againſt God.

VII. Diocletian that was the contriver of all our late miſeries, as he ruined the empire by his ill adminiſtration, ſo he could not be kept in from acting likewiſe in oppoſition to God. His avarice and his cowardice joined together, produced great miſchiefs. He aſſumed to himſelf three partners in the empire, having divided it into four parts; and he did ſo encreaſe the number of his troops, that every one of the four had a greater army than the former emperors had, who alone governed the whole empire; and the number of thoſe who received his pay, growing greater than that of thoſe who payed him taxes, there was ſuch an increaſe of new impoſitions, that thoſe who laboured the ground being exhauſted by them, they

deſerted the empire, and by this means the beſt cultivated ſoils were turned to deſarts and woods; and ſo ſevere was his government, that he erected a great many new charges and employments; the provinces were divided into many ſeparated juriſdictions: many new preſidents and courts, auditors, and other magiſtrates were ſet up both in towns and countries, who took little care of the adminiſtration of juſtice, their time being all employed in condemnations and attainders; and they laid ſo many taxes upon all ſorts of things, that as the burdens under which the people groaned were encreaſed every day, ſo in the levying of them great violences were likewiſe committed. All this had been more tolerable, if the money ſo raiſed had circulated among the ſoldiers; but the emperor's avarice was ſuch, that he could not endure to ſee his treaſure any way diminiſhed; and therefore

he was always contriving new ways of raiſing money, that ſo his exchequer might be always full: and that though his expence was great, yet his income might ſo anſwer it, that he ſhould never leſſen that ſtock of money which by his exactions he had brought together. After that the many oppreſſions which he put in practice had brought a general dearth upon the empire, then he ſet himſelf to regulate the prices of all vendible things. There was alſo much blood ſhed upon very ſlight and trifling accounts; and the people brought proviſions no more to markets, ſince they could not get a reaſonable price for them: and this encreaſed the dearth ſo much, that at laſt, after many had died by it, the law itſelf was laid aſide. To all theſe Diocletian added an inclination to build great fabricks, and this brought a new charge on ſeveral provinces both for furniſhing of labourers, and artificers,

and of waggons for carriage. He built palaces for himſelf, for his wife, and for his daughters: and to theſe he added a Hippodrome, an arſenal, and a mint houſe: ſo that in a little while a great part of Nicomedia being filled with thoſe buildings, many of the inhabitants were forced to leave the town with their wives and children, as if it had been taken by an enemy: and when he had finiſhed a piece of building at the coſt of ruining ſome of the provinces by it, he found ſome fault or other in it, and then he pulled all down, and gave orders to rebuild it in another manner: nor was this ſecond building ſecured from a new caprice, upon which it might be likewiſe perhaps levelled with the ground. So madly expenceful was he in the deſign that he took into his head of making Nicomedia equal to Rome itſelf. I paſs over the ruin of many, who were brought under ſevere

judgments, that ſo a colour in law might be found for ſeizing on their eſtates: for this was become ſuch a common practice, that the frequency of committing it had almoſt authorized it. And this was certain that wherever a man was the maſter of a rich piece of ſoil, or of a noble building, that ſeemed to be crime enough; and a pretence was quickly found out for condemning the owner, as if it had not been enough to ſeize his eſtate, without taking away his life likewiſe.

VIII. His colleague in the empire, Maximian, ſurnamed the Herculian, was not unlike him. Nor could they have been cemented into ſo entire a friendſhip, if they had not been both of the ſame mind, the ſame thoughts, the ſame inclinations, and the ſame deſigns. In this they differed, that Maximian had more courage as well as more avarice than Diocletian; who as he was

fearful, ſo perhaps from that principle he was leſs ravenous. Yet Maximian's courage conſiſted rather in a daring to commit crimes, than in a generous nobleneſs of mind. And tho' his ſhare comprehended not only Italy itſelf, the ſeat of empire, but likewiſe thoſe rich provinces of Africk and Spain, yet he was not ſo careful in the management of his treaſure as was neceſſary; but as oft as he wanted money, the richeſt of the ſenators were accuſed by ſome witneſſes, that were ſuborned to ſwear againſt them of ſome practices for the empire, and thus every day there were new arts ſet on foot to get rid of the eminenteſt men of the ſenate, ſo that the ravenous exchequer was often full of this ill-acquired wealth. That accurſed man did alſo let looſe his appetites not only in thoſe unnatural and hateful diſorders with boys, but likewiſe in the debauching the daughters of ſome that

were of the firſt rank. For whenſoever he was in any journey, as he paſt he had inſtruments at hand, to bring virgins to him by force in the very ſight of their parents. It was on theſe things that he built his happineſs; and he reckoned the chief felicity of empire to conſiſt in this, that he denied himſelf in nothing to which either his vicious appetite or his luſts carried him.

I ſay nothing of Conſtantius, becauſe he was ſo very unlike the reſt; and did indeed deſerve that the whole empire ſhould fall into his hands.

IX. But the other Maximian who married Diocletian's daughter, was not only worſe than the two formerly mentioned, but did exceed the wickedneſs of the worſt princes that ever were: there was a barbarous brutality in his temper, together with a cruelty not known to thoſe that were of a Roman extraction: and no wonder, for his mo-

ther was born beyond the Danube: and when ſome of thoſe nations croſſed that river, ſhe came along with them, and had ſettled herſelf in that part of Dacia which was formed into a province by Aurelian. His body was ſuitable to his mind: he was very tall, and moſt exceſſively corpulent: and there was a fierceneſs in his looks, his words, and in his whole behaviour, that gave a very formidable idea of him. His father in law, Diocletian, dreaded him extremely upon this following account: Narſes king of Perſia, being encouraged by the ſucceſs that his grandfather Sapores had againſt Valerian, reſolved to extend his empire, and to drive the Romans out of the eaſt: upon which Diocletian, who was naturally very fearful, quite deſponded, and fearing a fate like Valerian's, he durſt not undertake that war, but ſent Maximian into Armenia, and ſtayed behind himſelf, that

ſo he might ſee what was like to be the iſſue of this war: Maximian took his meaſures ſo well, that finding the Perſian army exceeding numerous, and that they were much encumbered with a vaſt equipage, that they drew along with them, their wives having followed them in this expedition according to the ancient Perſian cuſtom: he, I ſay, got ſuch advantages againſt them, that without any conſiderable loſs, he defeated their whole army. Narſes himſelf eſcaped, but Maximian took all their baggage, and ſo returned with great glory, which encreaſed his inſolence, as much as it did his father-in-law's apprehenſions of him. For upon ſo great a victory, he thought it below him to carry only the ſecond rank of honour, and to be only called Caeſar; and when at any time he received letters addreſſed to him, with the inſcription Caeſar, he uſed to cry out in his

brutal way, 'Muſt I be ſtill Caeſar?' He grew at laſt to that pitch of inſolence, as to give it out, that Mars was his Father; ſo that he ought to be lookt on as another Romulus, not conſidering the prejudice he did to his mother's honour, of which he made ſmall account, deſiring only to be lookt on as begotten by a god. But I will not now enter into the particulars of his life, that ſo I may not confound the order of things: for it was after his aſſuming the imperial dignity, of which he forced his father-in-law to ſtrip himſelf, that he broke looſe into all the exceſſes of inſolence and fury; in the mean time, though Diocletian by his own ill conduct, and that of the two Maximians, whom he had taken co-partners into the government, (the firſt as emperor, and the ſecond as Caeſar) had brought great diſorder upon the whole ſtate of the empire, and tho' his private

crimes were very crying, yet matters proſpered in his hands in a very unuſual manner, till he came to defile them with the blood of the ſaints; and this carries me to give you an account of the occaſion that led him to perſecute them.

X. While he was in the eaſt, he being exceſſively deſirous to know what was to be the event of things, offered many ſacrifices, and in their livers the diviners ſearcht for thoſe indications, upon which they pretended to foretel things to come: but ſome of his courtiers, that were Chriſtians, being near him, made the ſign of the croſs on their fore-heads, at which the devils being frighted away, they were all put in a great confuſion. The diviners being likewiſe in diſorder, could not find the ordinary marks that they lookt for in the intrails of the ſacrifices; tho' they offered up many, one after another,

pretending that the divinity was not yet appeaſed; but all the number of their ſacrifices was to no purpoſe, for no ſigns appeared: upon which Tages that was ſet over the diviners ſaid, either upon ſome conjecture or upon knowledge, that their rites did not ſucceed, becauſe there were ſome prophane perſons that had thruſt themſelves into their aſſembly. Upon which Diocletian being enraged, commanded, that not only all thoſe who were preſent, but that all the reſt of his courtiers ſhould come and ſacrifice to their gods, and ordered thoſe to be whipped who ſhould refuſe to do it. He likewiſe ſent orders to his military officers, to require all the ſoldiers to ſacrifice, and to diſmiſs ſuch as would not. But this was all that he thought fit to do at firſt, nor did he ſuffer his rage to carry him to farther extremities againſt God or his true religion, till after ſome time had paſt, that

he came to winter in Bythinia: and there Galerius Maximian, who was likewiſe enflamed againſt the Chriſtians, met him, and engaged the vain old man to go on with the perſecution, which he had already begun, concerning whom I have received this account of the grounds of his fury againſt our religion.

XI. His mother was a ſuperſtitious woman, and was particularly addicted to the devotion of the gods of the mountains, ſo that ſhe offered ſacrifices to them daily, and feaſted her officers with the meat of thoſe oblations. The Chriſtians would not aſſiſt at thoſe entertainments, but gave themſelves to faſting and prayer, while ſhe and her company were at thoſe feaſts. Upon this ſhe conceived a hatred of them, and ſhe ſet on her ſon, who was no leſs ſuperſtitious than ſhe herſelf, by her ſpiteful complaints to contrive their deſtructi-

on. Diocletian and his ſon-in-law had many ſecret conſultations during a whole winter, to which as no body was admitted, ſo it was generally thought that they were treating about matters of the greateſt conſequences. The old man withſtood Maximian's fury long, and ſhewed him how pernicious the counſel would prove, and how great a diſturbance it would bring upon the empire; much blood would be ſhed; for the Chriſtians were obſerved to be very willing to die. Therefore he propoſed this expedient, that none of that religion ſhould be ſuffered to continue in the court, or in the army: but all this could not divert the rage of that furious man. Therefore he propoſed the asking the opinions of thoſe in whom they confided; for he had this piece of ill nature, that when he was about to do any thing that was acceptable, he did it of himſelf, without tak-

ing the advice of others, that ſo the praiſe of it might belong wholly to himſelf: but when he undertook any thing that was liable to cenſure, he called for many perſons to deliver their opinion upon it, that ſo others might be charged with the blame of that in which he was chiefly in fault. Some few judges, and ſome few military men were called upon, and according to the order of their dignity they were required to tell their minds; ſome that had a particular ſpleen to the Chriſtian religion, opined that all the Chriſtians were enemies to God and to the eſtabliſhed worſhip, and that therefore they ought to be deſtroyed. Thoſe that were of another mind, perceiving what was Maximian's deſign, and being either afraid of him, or deſirous to make their court with him, agreed to the reſt in opinion; yet all this did not prevail on Diocletian; ſo he reſolved to conſult

the gods themſelves, and ſent a diviner to conſult with Apollo, who anſwered as might have been expected from an enemy of the Chriſtian religion. Upon this Diocletian yielded; and as he would not oppoſe himſelf to that which not only his friends and Maximian, but even Apollo had adviſed, yet he endeavoured to maintain this moderation, that the deſign might be compoſed without the ſhedding of blood: whereas Maximian moved, that all thoſe who refuſed to partake in the ſacrifices, ſhould be burnt alive.

XII. A proper and an auſpicious day for beginning this work, was next ſought for; and choice was made of the feſtivity of the god Terminus, which was within five days of the end of February, that was the concluſion of their year: implying by this, that an end was to be put to this religion. This was the firſt day of their executions, and

the beginning of thoſe miſeries that not only fell on them, but on the whole empire. In the morning of that fatal day, in the ſeventh and eighth conſulate of the two ancient emperors, the prefect accompanied with ſome officers, and ſome of the receivers, went to the church, and having forced open the door, they ſearched for the image of God*: all the books of the ſcriptures that were there found were burnt, and the ſpoil that was made was divided among all that were preſent: this ſtruck a terror into many, and many withdrew themſelves from the ſtorm. The two princes, who from convenient places viewed all that was done (for that church ſtood upon a heighth, ſo that it

* Not that the Chriſtians had any images in their temples, as Lactantius himſelf teſtifies, de Origine Erroris, lib. 2. pag. 65, 66, 67, 107, but the Heathens having images in all their temples, were ready to conceive the like of them.

was within the proſpect of the palace) were long in debate, whether they ſhould order fire to be ſet to it: but in this Diocletian's opinion prevailed; for he was afraid leſt if the church had been ſet on fire, that might have ſpread itſelf into the other parts of the city: for it was environed on all hands by a great many noble buildings; ſo that inſtead of ſetting fire to it, there was a conſiderable body of the guards ſent with axes and mattocks, who in a few hours time levelled that lofty building with the ground.

XIII. The day after this an edict was publiſhed, by which the Chriſtians were declared incapable of all honours and employments; and that they ſhould be liable to torture whatſoever might be their rank and dignity: all actions were to be received againſt them, and they were put out of the protection of the law, and might not ſue neither up-

on injuries done them, or adulteries committed againſt them, nor for theſts or robberies; and they were to looſe both their liberties and their right of voting. When this was affixed, one that ſhewed more of courage than diſcretion in it, took it down and tore it, and rallied the emperors, who had put among their titles, that they had triumphed over the Goths and the Sarmatians, that they acted like thoſe whom they pretended that they had ſubdued; he was preſently ſeized on, and after he had endured ſeveral ſorts of torture; he was burnt at laſt, but ſuffered all with admirable patience.

XIV. But Maximian was not ſatisfied with the ſeverity of this edict, ſo he reſolved to draw on Diocletian to conſent to further rigour by this artifice; he ſet on ſome of his creatures to raiſe a fire in the palace, that ſo he might engage him to an unrelenting perſecution: ſome

parts were burnt down, and the Chriſtians were preſently accuſed as the common enemies; and this fire, that conſumed the palace, raiſed a moſt implacable rage againſt them. For it was given out, that they had entred into conſultation with ſome of the eunuchs for the deſtruction of their princes, and that two emperors were well nigh burnt alive in their own houſe. Diocletian, who affected the reputation of being a wiſe and crafty man, could not be brought to give any credit to this: but being exceſſively enraged upon it, he ordered many of his domeſtics to be put to death in a moſt terrible manner. So many innocent perſons were brought before him, and were burnt. All the judges and all the officers of his houſhold being authoriſed thereunto, put all people to torture, and ſeemed to vie with one another who ſhould be the firſt that ſhould diſcover the bottom of

this matter. But nothing could be found out; for none of Maximian's family was put to the torture. He came and ſtood by Diocletian, and continued ſtill to enflame him more and more, that ſo his anger might no way be abated. And a fortnight after the firſt burning, fire was a ſecond time ſet to the palace: but this was obſerved in time, yet neither could the author of it be found out. And then Maximian, tho' it was in the midſt of winter, left Nicomedia on the ſame day in which this ſecond fire was raiſed, proteſting that he went away fearing leſt he ſhould be burnt alive.

XV. The emperor was now ſet all on fire, and upon this he forced not only all that were of his houſhold, but all perſons whatſoever, to defile themſelves with their ſacrifices; beginning with his daughter Valeria, and his wife Priſca. Some of the eunuchs that were in the greateſt credit, and by whoſe directions

the whole affairs of the palace had been conducted before this edict, were now put to death; some presbyters and deacons were seized on, and without any proof against them, they were condemned and executed. Persons of all ages, and of both sexes were burnt, not singly one by one, but by reason of their numbers, whole companies of them were burnt all in the same fire: and their servants were cast into the sea, mill-stones being tied about their necks. Nor was this persecution less violent in all other places: for the judges were sent to all temples, and they forced all people to join in the sacrifices. The prisons were every where full. Unheard of kinds of torture were invented; and that no man might have the benefit of the law that was not a heathen, they placed altars in the very courts of justice, and in the public offices, that so all who came to sue before them might be put to it first

to offer ſacrifice, before they could be admitted to plead: ſo that men came before their judges as before their gods. Nor was this all, letters were alſo ſent to the other emperor and to Conſtance, inviting them to concur in this matter, though their opinions had not been before asked, notwithſtanding the great importance of it. The old Maximian did comply very willingly in Italy; for he was naturally cruel: but Conſtance, that he might not ſeem to diſſent from thoſe that were in rank above him, did indeed give order for the pulling down the walls of the houſes where the Chriſtians held their aſſemblies; for theſe could be eaſily rebuilt; but he took care to preſerve thoſe true temples of God, I mean the Chriſtians themſelves.

XVI. The whole world was now brought under great vexation, the Gauls only excepted; thoſe three wild beaſts exerciſed their cruelty upon all the pro-

vinces from the eaſt to the weſt. If I had a hundred tongues, and the ſtrongeſt voice, I could not ſet out all the forms of crimes, and all the names of the tortures, that the judges in the ſeveral provinces put in practice againſt ſo many holy and innocent perſons; but what need I engage in this recital, eſpecially to you my dear Donatus, who had ſo extraordinary a ſhare in them. For whereas you firſt fell into the hands of the prefect Flaccinus, who was not a ſmall murderer, you fell next into the hands of Hierocles, who from being a deputy was made a preſident, and had been an adviſer and promoter of the perſecution; and in the laſt place, you was brought before Priſcillian his ſucceſſor, where, as well as before the other two, you gave an evidence of your unconquered courage: you were nine ſeveral times put to a great many tortures, and at every one of them you o-

vercame the rage of your enemies, by a glorious confeſſion. In thoſe nine encounters with the devil you defeated him with his whole troop of aſſiſtants; and by ſo many victories you triumphed over the world with all its terrors. How pleaſant was that triumph in the ſight of God, in which inſtead of white horſes or elephants about your chariot, you triumphed over the emperors themſelves, and ſeem'd to drag them after your chariot. This is true victory, when thoſe that have conquered the world, are ſubdued: for they were overcome and ſubdued by you, who deſpiſing their impious edicts, made no account of all the pomp and terrors of their tyrannical authority. Their whippings and their pincers, their fires and ſwords, and all the ſeveral ſhapes of torture, had no effect upon you: no ſort of violence could make you fall from the faith, and from the true wor-

ſhip of God. This is to be a true diſciple and a true ſoldier of Chriſt; whom no enemy can overcome, no wolf can carry out of God's fold, no ſnare can entangle, no ſorrow can ſubdue, and no torture can break. After all thoſe nine engagements, that proved ſo glorious to you, the devil finding himſelf always overcome by you, durſt not aſſault you any more: for experience had ſhewed him, that you were not to be vanquiſhed: and ſince he ſaw that the crown of victory was ready to be beſtowed on you, he would not, by provoking you any further, give you the occaſion of receiving it ſo ſoon. Though it was not given to you then, it is ſafely kept for you in the kingdom of God, as the recompence of your virtue and worth. But now I return to the ſeries of the hiſtory.

XVII. Diocletian being now engaged into this wicked deſign, and having

ſucceeded ſo well in the execution of it, went ſtreight to Rome, that ſo he might celebrate there his entring upon the twentieth year of his empire, that he was to open upon the anniverſary of his coming to it, which was the twentieth of November. But as ſoon as that was over, he ſhewed how little he could bear that freedom that the Romans had ſtill retained; at which he was ſo uneaſy, that tho' the firſt of January was very near, in which he was to enter upon his ninth conſulate, yet he could not be prevailed on to ſtay to that day, and ſo he could not bear the ſtaying thirteen days longer at Rome, but he began his conſulate at Ravenna. The winter was both extreme cold and rainy, ſo that the journey did ſo affect his health, that it threw him into a lingring ſickneſs, that never went off quite: and being ill all the way, he was forced to be carried

for moſt part in a litter. His illneſs lay upon him all the ſummer long: about the end of it he continued his journey, and having come round the coaſt of Phrygia, he got at laſt to Nicomedia, his ſickneſs being now come to a great height. But though he was brought very low by it, yet he would needs appear in public, and aſſiſt at the dedication of the Hippodrome that he had built, which was done at the end of his twentieth year of empire. His ſickneſs grew at laſt to ſuch a degree, that ſupplications were made to all the gods for his life: but on the thirteenth of December a report was ſpread all about the palace, that he was dead: the ſad looks and the terror that appeared in all his courtiers, and the ſolemn ſilence that was over all the court, made that the report was generally believed. The city of Nicomedia believed him not only dead, but buried; but the next

day it was given out that he was yet alive; upon which the countenances of many that were concerned were much changed: but others believed ſtill that he was dead, and that it was concealed for fear of the ſoldiery, leſt they ſhould have fallen into ſome dangerous conſultations, and that therefore his death was to be kept up till Maximian ſhould come to Nicomedia. This grew to be ſo univerſally believed, that if he had not ſhewed himſelf on the firſt of March, it had not been poſſible to have perſwaded the people that he was ſtill alive. He was ſtrangely altered by a whole years ſickneſs, ſo that they to whom he was very well known, could hardly believe him to be the ſame. He had indeed on the thirteenth of December fallen into ſo deep a ſwoon, that it was thought he was dead, and he never recovered this ſo entirely, as to be wholly what he had been formerly: for he

had ever after this ſome fits of madneſs, which returned at ſome times upon him, tho' in the intervals of thoſe fits he had his underſtanding very perfect.

XVIII. Not many days after this, Galerius Maximian came to him, not to congratulate upon his recovery, but to force him to reſign the empire. He had made the ſame attempt upon the elder Maximian, and threatned him with a civil war if he would not reſign; ſo now he ſet on Diocletian. He began at firſt more ſoftly and gently with him; telling him, that he was now become ancient and infirm, and leſs able to undergo the fatigue of government, and that therefore he ought to give himſelf ſome repoſe after ſo much application and toil. He ſet before him Nerva's example, who reſigned the empire to Trajan: Diocletian anſwered, That as it was not honourable for him, after he had born ſo ſublime a character ſo long,

to ſhut himſelf up in an obſcure corner; ſo it could not be ſafe for him to do it, ſince during ſo long a reign he muſt needs have made himſelf many enemies. The caſe was quite different in Nerva, who had paſt his whole life in retirement; ſo that his great age and his unacquaintedneſs with affairs made him leſs capable of bearing ſo great a burden, which therefore he threw off, and returned to that privacy in which he had ſpent the former parts of his life. But he offered to Maximian to receive him to an equal dignity with himſelf, ſo that they ſhould be all called emperors, if that would have contented him. The other, who had now formed a project of making himſelf ſole emperor, ſeeing that from this title that was offered him, little real advantage would accrue to him, pretended that the order which Diocletian had begun, of having two emperors with the ſupreme power,

and two aſſiſtants to them in a lower degree of dignity, ought to be for ever maintained: it was an eaſy thing to preſerve a good correſpondence between two perſons, but that could not be compaſſed if there came to be four of equal dignity. He concluded, that if the emperor would not retire, and make way for him, he would ſee to himſelf; for he would be no longer contented with the low degree in which he had been ſo long held: he had been now for fifteen years as it were baniſhed to Illyricum, along the river of the Danube, and engaged in conſtant wars with the barbarous nations; while others were reigning quietly, and in delicious ſeats. The old man, that was now much broken, having heard all this, and having likewiſe received letters from the elder Maximian, that gave him an account of what had been ſaid to himſelf upon that ſubject, and had alſo heard that

Galerius Maximian was encreaſing his army; upon this, not without tears, he conſented to that which had been propoſed to him; ſo that which remained was, that the Caeſars ſhould be named by the concurring advices of all the four. But the other rejected this, and ſaid, that the other two muſt conſent to whatſoever they ſhould reſolve on: and indeed, it ſeemed that there was no room for choice, but that the ſons of the other two muſt have been named for Caeſars. Maxentius was ſon to the elder Maximian, and had married the younger Maximian's daughter. He was a man of a wicked and vicious diſpoſition, and was ſo proud and ſo wilful, that he would not pay the wonted reſpect of adoration, neither to his father, nor to his father-in-law; ſo that he was equally hated of both. Conſtantine ſon to Conſtance was a moſt virtuous youth, and had all the qualities

that could recommend him to the higheſt dignity: his air and perſon were graceful; his capacity for military affairs, his probity, and his obliging deportment, made that he was beloved of the ſoldiers, and wiſhed for by all perſons: he was then in Diocletian's court, and was put by him in the chief command of the army. But Maximian had his objections to both theſe: as for Maxentius he thought he was not worthy of that dignity, and he reckoned, that he who had behaved himſelf ſo inſolently towards him, while he was a private perſon, would become intolerable if he were raiſed ſo high. Conſtantine was indeed ſo amiable a perſon, that it was thought he would be a better and a gentler prince than his father had been: and ſo he would be able to check him as he pleaſed: wherefore Maximian reſolved to have ſuch perſons promoted, who ſhould be always in his power, who

ſhould be afraid of him, and ſhould do nothing but by his order, ſo he propoſed Severus: Diocletian excepted to him, as a mad extravagant, and drunken perſon, who changed the day into night, and the night into day: but the other anſwered, that he had deſerved that dignity well, for he had taken great care of the army, and had payed them faithfully; and added, that he had ſent him to Maximian the elder, that he might receive the nomination from him; ſo this was agreed to: and when Diocletian asked him who ſhould be the other, he preſented one Daia to him, a young man, that was half a barbarian by his extraction, and whom he had lately ordered to be called Maximin from his own name. For Diocletian had changed his own name to that, to diſtinguiſh him from the other Maximian, who had always maintained his fidelity to him moſt religiouſly. Dio-

cletian asked him who that young man was; the other ſaid, he was his ally: but he ſighed, and replied, that he did not propoſe to him perſons that were capable of conducting the common-wealth; the other ſaid, that he had already tried them. Diocletian inſiſted and ſaid, that he who was to enter upon the empire, ought to ſee to it: and that for his part, he had taken his ſhare of toil, and had ſtudied to preſerve the common-wealth in a good ſtate during his empire, but if after his time it ſhould fall into diſorder, it ſhould not be by his fault. All things being thus concerted in ſecret, on the firſt of May this great affair came to be declared. The eyes of all people were on Conſtantine, not doubting but the nomination muſt fall on him: all the military men, as well the ſoldiers as the officers, lookt at him, wiſht for him, and ſhewed much joy in the hopes that they expreſ-

ſed of his advancement: there was a riſing ground at almoſt three miles diſtance from the city, and it was there where Maximian himſelf had firſt received the imperial purple, in remembrance of which there was a pillar erected with a ſtatue of Jupiter's upon it. That place was markt out for this ſolemnity, and the army was drawn out about it: and there the old man with tears in his eyes, told the ſoldiers, that he was now become infirm, and therefore he was reſolved to give himſelf ſome reſt after ſo much toil, and to deliver up the empire to thoſe who were able to undergo the fatigue of it: and that in order to that, he would now name new Ceſars. Upon this all mens expectations being raiſed, he named Severus and Maximin; all people were amazed; and ſince Conſtantine was ſtanding by, ſome began to ask whether he had changed his name into Maximin: but to the admiration

of all the ſpectators, Maximian put by Conſtantine, and drew out Daia, and ſhewed him to the people, having ſtript him of the habit that he wore as a private perſon: and while all men were ſurprized, and knew neither who he was, nor of whom he was deſcended, (tho' this unlookt for promotion, had ſo diſordered them, that they teſtified no averſion to it) Diocletian threw his purple robe about him, and ſo he himſelf retired to a private ſtate again, and returned to his private name of Diocles, which upon his coming to the empire he had changed to Diocletian, and thus the ſolemnity ended: and the old emperor, like a ſoldier that had obtained his diſmiſſion, retired, and drove thro' Nicomedia, and ſo went into his own country. And Daia, that was raiſed up from following of cattle through woods, and was firſt a common ſoldier, then an officer, after that a brigadier, and now

at laſt got to be Ceſar, had the eaſt aſſigned to him, to be oppreſſed and ruined by him. And though he neither underſtood military affairs, nor matters of ſtate, yet he was now ſet to conduct armies inſtead of feeding cattle.

XIX. Maximian having now effected that which he projected, in driving out the old men, behaved himſelf as if he had been the ſole emperor of the whole Roman empire. For though Conſtance had the precedence, and ſo was to be always named before him, yet he was deſpiſed by him, both becauſe he was naturally of a mild temper, and was now much diſabled through the indiſpoſition of his body. He believed that either he would ſoon die, or that it would be no hard thing to force him to reſign his ſhare of the empire. There was about Maximian one Licinius, who was his ancient friend; for they had been comerades from their firſt employ-

ments in the army: and he had now the chief ſtroke in all affairs. Maximian had not put him in the nomination of the Ceſars, becauſe he would not put him in a rank ſo far inferior to himſelf as to call him ſon, but he reckoned that Conſtance would ſoon die, and then he was reſolved to receive him to be his brother and collegue in the empire: and thus he projected to eſtabliſh himſelf in his authority, and to be able to carry all things according to his mind; and after he ſhould come to his twentieth year, and celebrate the feſtivals of it, as his predeceſſors had done, he intended to reſign the empire, and to put his ſon in his ſtead, who was now only nine years old: ſo that he intended that Licinius and Severus ſhould be the emperors, and that Maximin and Candidianus ſhould be the Ceſars: and thus he being eſtabliſhed and ſecured as much as was poſſible, ſhould paſs the

reſt of his days in quiet, and great ſafety. Theſe were his deſigns: but he having made God his enemy, all his projects came to nothing.

XX. He having attained the ſupreme dignity, ſet himſelf to diſquiet the world, that was now become ſubject to him. In his expedition againſt the Perſians he had obſerved that cuſtom which was eſtabliſhed among them, by which all thoſe nations eſteemed themſelves the ſlaves of their kings: ſo that they reigned over them with as abſolute an authority, as a maſter of a family does over thoſe of his houſhold. This vile man intended to eſtabliſh the ſame method of government in the Roman empire: and he was ſo impudent, that ever after that victory, he uſed to magnify it: and though he durſt not openly attempt the reducing the Romans to the ſame ſtate, yet he behaved himſelf ſo as if he had conſidered all others as

his ſlaves: he began with the degrading thoſe that were in honourable employments; for he ſubjected the magiſtrates and the chief citizens of the greateſt cities, that were in the eminenteſt rank, to the law of torture: and upon the ſlighteſt accounts, and in matters that were merely civil, he would put them to death as the fancy took him, and for leſſer tranſgreſſions he put them in irons; he took ſuch women of quality as pleaſed him out of their own houſes, and brought them by violence to his ſeraglio: and when any were to be whipped, he had poſts ſtruck into the ground in his ſtables, to which they were tied, and ſo ſtretched out, which was done more infamouſly than was wont to be done to the ſlaves themſelves. What ſhall I ſay of his diverſions, and his pleaſure? He had ſome bears that he had choſen out in a great many years among all others, that were the biggeſt

and the fierceſt that could be found, and that were by conſequence ſo much the liker to himſelf: and when he intended to divert himſelf, he ordered one of theſe to be brought out, and a man to be thrown to him, not to be killed by him outright, but to be eat up in morſels: and as the limbs of thoſe wretches were torn aſunder, he uſed to burſt out moſt indecently into laughter; ſo that he ſeldom went to ſupper before he had ſhed ſome man's blood. As for thoſe that had no dignity, he condemned them to be burnt: and tho' at firſt he gave the Chriſtians leave to be gone, yet afterwards he not only condemned them to torture, but to be burnt in ſlow fires: the manner of which was this, they were firſt chained to a poſt, then there was a gentle fire ſet to the ſoles of their feet, by which all the callus of the foot was contracted, till at laſt it fell all off from the bones;

then flambeaux were lighted and put out, and while they were hot, they clapt them to all the parts of their body, that ſo they might be tortured all over: and care was taken to keep them alive as long as was poſſible, by throwing cold water in their faces, and by giving them wherewith to waſh their mouths, leſt otherwiſe the violence of the miſery that they ſuffered ſhould have quite dried up their throats, and ſo choaked them. Thus their ſufferings were lengthened out whole days, till at laſt their skin being quite conſumed by the fire, it at laſt reacht to their vitals, and then a great fire was kindled, into which they were thrown, and ſo their bodies were burnt to aſhes: and their bones that were not quite burnt, were gathered, and ground to powder, and thrown into ſome river, or into the ſea.

XXI. Theſe practices of cruelty,

that were begun upon the Chriſtians, grew in him to ſuch a habit, that he began to exerciſe them upon others; he never puniſhed any gently: he ſeldom baniſhed any, nor did he condemn many to impriſonment, or to work in mines; but his daily judgments, which paſt the moſt eaſily from him, were the condemning men to be burnt, to be crucified, or to be thrown to wild beaſts. His domeſtics, and thoſe whom he employed in his affairs, were alſo ſeverely diſciplined by him. And as to all capital matters, beheading was thought an extraordinary grace, which was granted to very few; ſo that it was looked on as a reward for paſt ſervices, to have the favour of a gentle death; yet all theſe were ſmall matters. Eloquence was extinguiſhed by him; the advocates were deſtroyed, and all that were learned in the law, were either baniſhed, or put to death; all ſort of literature was rec-

koned among the ill arts, and all learned men were lookt on as ill affected to the emperor, and were both hated and ruined by him. The judges having ſuperſeded all the laws, had a licence given them to do whatſoever they pleaſed; and military men, who had no ſort of learning, were made judges in the ſeveral provinces, without having ſo much as aſſeſſors aſſigned them.

XXII. He alſo took care to involve the whole empire into a general calamity, and under a common grievance, by the new tax that he laid both on the cities and provinces: which was ſo ſeverely levied by the taxmen that he ſent every where, that the ſtate of affairs lookt as diſmal as if the empire had been over-run by ſome enemy, or as if it had been brought under ſome heavy bondage. All men's fields were meaſured, an account was taken of all their trees and vines, and of all cattle; all

men were likewiſe polled, and where thoſe liſts were made, no difference was put between thoſe that lived in town or country. And as the taxing was managed in the towns, without any diſtinction of the ancient citizens, and thoſe that were newly come out of the country, ſo in the villages all people came with their children and ſlaves to be liſted: and upon the ſlighteſt ſuſpicions men were whipt or tortured; children were hanged up in the ſight of their parents; ſlaves were dealt with to accuſe their maſters, and wives to accuſe their husbands. When no ſort of evidence could be found, men were forced by torture to accuſe themſelves; and when any thing was thus extorted from them, then they were proceeded againſt as if they had been clearly convicted of thoſe crimes. No regard was had either to mens age or infirmity: for the ſick and feeble were taxed as well as the whole:

and in the eſtimate that was made of mens age, they added years to thoſe that were not yet of age, as they detracted ſome from thoſe that were paſt it. All places were full of grief and ſorrow. And he adventured to put in execution againſt the Romans, and thoſe provinces that were ſubjected to them, all that any conquerors had done to thoſe who being ſubdued by them, were by the law of war at their mercy: as if he would have revenged the tax that Trajan put on his anceſtors, the Dacians, which he laid on them as a puniſhment for their frequent rebellions. After that all men were thus liſted, then ſo much money was laid upon every man's head, as if he had been to pay ſo much for his life. Yet this matter was not truſted to the firſt taxmen, but new ſets of them one after another, were ſent about; that new men might always find new matter to work upon;

and though they could really diſcover nothing, yet they encreaſed the numbers in the liſts that they made, that ſo it might not be ſaid, that they had been ſent to no purpoſe. By the means of thoſe oppreſſions, the ſtock of the cattle was much diminiſhed, and many men died: and yet the taxes continued ſtill to be levied, even for thoſe that were dead: to ſuch miſery were men reduced, that even death did not put an end to it. The beggars were the only perſons that were exempted from theſe oppreſſions; for to have nothing to pay, was the only way to be covered from thoſe exactions: but this curſed man took care to put an end to their want; for he gave orders to gather them all together, and to put them in veſſels, and when they were at ſea, he ordered them to be all drowned. So compaſſionate was he, that he was reſolved that no body ſhould be extremely miſerable

during his reign: thus he found out an effectual expedient to keep all men from pretending poverty, as an excuſe from paying the taxes; but he at the ſame time, againſt all the rules of humanity, put a multitude of miſerable perſons to death.

XXIII. At laſt the judgments of God came to ſeize on him: and now all that ſucceſs which he had hitherto enjoyed came to be changed. While he was applying himſelf to thoſe things of which I have given you an account, he had taken no care to deſtroy or to dethrone Conſtance; for he was waiting for his death; yet he did not apprehend that it would come ſo ſuddenly as it did. But Conſtance being now very ſick, writ to him that he might ſend his ſon Conſtantine to him, having made the ſame deſire often before, but to no purpoſe: for Maximian had no mind to let him go to his father: on the contrary, he

had expoſed him to many dangers, hoping that he would have fallen under ſome of them; he durſt not make an open attempt upon him, fearing a civil war, or rather a mutiny among the ſoldiers: but under a pretence of exerciſing him, he had engaged him to encounter with wild beaſts, yet all was in vain; for as the hand of God was viſible in protecting him all along, ſo it appeared moſt ſignally now in the laſt and critical moment; for the emperor not knowing how he could deny it any longer, granted him at laſt a paſs, which had the ſeal put to it, while it was late; but he ordered him to come to him next morning to receive his commands; and he had reſolved either to find ſome colour for hindring his journey, or to ſend orders to Severus, to ſtop him on the way. Conſtantine had ſome apprehenſion of that which might happen, and therefore as ſoon as the emperor

went to ſleep, after ſupper he took journey, and in the ſeveral ſtages through which he paſt, he carried with him all the poſt horſes. The emperor on purpoſe to delay him, did not open his door next day till it was noon, and then he called for him: but he heard that he had gone laſt night, immediately after ſupper; upon which the emperor fell into a moſt violent fit of rage; and ordered ſome to be ſent after him for fetching him back; but when he underſtood that he carried all the poſt horſes with him, ſo that this could not be done, the emperor could hardly forbear weeping. Conſtantine made all the haſte that was poſſible, and found his father juſt breathing out his laſt. Conſtance recommended his ſon to the ſoldiers, and delivered over the empire to him, and ſo he ended his life in all points as he wiſhed to do. Conſtantine was no ſooner poſſeſſed of the empire, than he gave

the Chriſtians the free liberty of their religion, ſo that his firſt edict was the reſtoring the exerciſe of this holy religion.

XXIV. Within a few days after this, his image with the characters of the imperial dignity upon it, was ſent to Maximian: he was long in ſuſpence, not knowing what he ſhould do, he once intended to throw both the image itſelf, and likewiſe him that brought it into the fire: but his friends diverted him from this; for they were ſenſible of the inconveniences of irritating the army, who were already diſpleaſed, becauſe that no notice was taken of them in the nomination of the Ceſars: and they might probably enough have declared for Conſtantine, if they ſhould have ſeen him coming againſt Maximian at the head of an army. Theſe advices prevailed ſo far upon him, that though it was much againſt his heart,

yet he received the ſtatue, and ſent Conſtantine the purple, that ſo it might appear that he had of his own accord received him into the partnerſhip of the empire. But this broke all his meaſures; nor could he now make another emperor ſupernumerary: yet he fell upon this contrivance, of declaring Severus, who was the ancienter perſon, emperor, and Conſtantine not emperor, (as had been already done) but Ceſar only, in partnerſhip with Maximin, that ſo inſtead of being next to himſelf, he might be the laſt of the four.

XXV. But while he thought that this matter was quite ſettled, he received a new alarm, which was, that Maxentius, who was his own ſon-in-law, was declared emperor at Rome. The occaſion of which was this: Maximian having reſolved to exhauſt the wealth of the whole empire by his impoſitions, proceeded to that pitch of madneſs, that

he would not ſo much as grant the city of Rome an exemption from this tax: ſo he named the taxmen, who ſhould go to Rome to take a liſt of all that were in in the city; he had alſo at the ſame time made an attempt upon ſome of the privileges of the pretorian bands; ſo a few of thoſe guards that were left at Rome, having found a fit opportunity for it, they firſt killed ſome of the judges, and perceiving that the people, who were now much irritated, were not ill pleaſed at this, they declared Maxentius emperor: when the news of this was brought to Maximian, he was a little diſordered with the firſt ſurprize of it, yet he was not much terrified at it. He both hated the man, and could not reſolve to make three Ceſars all at a time. He thought it was enough to have been for once conſtrained to do a thing to which he had not a mind, ſo he ſent for Severus, and perſuaded him

to aſſume the empire, and he ſent him againſt Maxentius with the army that had been under his father's command, and ordered him to march ſtreight to Rome, knowing well that thoſe ſoldiers, who had taſted ſo often of the pleaſures of that place, would not only endeavour to preſerve the city, but would deſire to make it their chief quarter. Maxentius beginning to reflect on the boldneſs of his undertaking, as on the one hand he had ſome reaſon to hope, that the army which had ſo long been commanded by his father, might be eaſily practiſed upon to declare for himſelf; ſo on the other hand he apprehended, that his father-in-law, fearing the ſame thing, might leave Severus in Illyricum, and might come in perſon with his own army to deſtroy him: upon this he began to contrive the means of ſecuring himſelf from this danger, which was hanging over

his head; ſo he ſent the purple to his father, who had lived in Campania ever ſince his reſignation of the empire: and he declared him now for the ſecond time emperor. His father, who had reſigned againſt his will, and was longing for a change in the ſtate of affairs, accepted of it very willingly. In the mean while Severus marched with his army, and came at laſt to the very walls of Rome. But the ſoldiers ſeeing againſt whom they were come, did immediately abandon him, and went over to him againſt whom they were ſent. Severus being thus forſaken, was forced to flie. But he was met on his way by Maximian the elder, who had now aſſumed the empire, ſo that to avoid him he went to Ravenna, and with a ſmall handful of men he ſhut himſelf up in that place: and ſeeing that he muſt needs be delivered up, he reſolved to prevent that, and both rendred himſelf,

and gave back the imperial purple to him, from whom he had received it: but all that he could obtain by this ſubmiſſion was a gentle death; for order was given to cut his veins, ſo that he died eaſily. Thus did Maximian perſecute thoſe that were raiſed up by himſelf.

XXVI. But Maximian the elder knew well the madneſs of Maximian the younger: and did not doubt but that as ſoon as the news of Severus his death ſhould be brought him, he would upon the heat of anger, into which that might throw him, march immediately with his army, and would perhaps bring along with him Maximin's forces; and he knew well that he was not ſtrong enough to reſiſt ſo great an army, therefore he fortified Rome, and having ſettled matters in the beſt method that he could, he marched into Gaul, that ſo he might engage Con-

ſtantine into his intereſts, by offering him his younger daughter in marriage. But the other Maximian having gathered together his troops, marched into Italy, and came to Rome, reſolving to extirpate the inhabitants, and in particular to deſtroy all the ſenators: but he found all ſhut againſt him, and well fortified: there was no hope of carrying it by a ſurprize, and it was a very hard thing to beſiege it, nor had he men enough for the ſiege: for he had never before ſeen Rome, nor knew how great it was; but had fancied that it was no greater than thoſe other cities which he had ſeen. Some of the legions began to have a horror at the unnatural war, in which the father-in-law, was fighting againſt his ſon-in-law, and the Roman ſoldiers were fighting againſt the city of Rome, upon which they carried their colours with them, and deſerted, and many others were ſtag-

gering, ſo that fearing Severus's fate, he was ſo ſunk with the fright into which this threw him, that caſting himſelf at the ſoldiers feet, he begged that they would not deliver him up to his enemy: and what with his ſubmiſſions, and what with the great promiſes that he made them, he prevailed over them to continue true to him; but he would not venture more with ſuch troops: ſo he marched away in all haſte, and in ſuch great conſternation, that if he had been purſued by ever ſo ſmall a body, it had been an eaſy thing to have defeated him quite, whereof being apprehenſive, he ſent out his army in parties on all hands, with orders to plunder and deſtroy the whole country, that it might not be poſſible for an army that might purſue him to find whereupon to ſubſiſt; ſo that all that part of Italy, through which this deſtroying army had marcht, was quite ruined; all was

ſpoiled, women were forced, virgins were raviſhed, and all men were tortured, that they might diſcover where their wives, their daughters, or their treaſures were concealed; and the flocks of ſheep and herds of cattle were driven before them, as they uſed to do the ſpoils that they took from the barbarians; and thus he, who inſtead of being the Roman emperor, was now become the plunderer of Italy, retired back into his own diviſion, after he had in this hoſtile manner deſtroyed the whole country. He had indeed long before this, at the time of his receiving the empire, declared himſelf ſuch an enemy to the very name of a Roman, that he once intended to have changed the very deſignation of the empire, ſo that inſtead of the Roman, it ſhould have been called the Dacian empire.

XXVII. After that he had left Italy in this manner, the other Maximian re-

turned out of Gaul, and he and his ſon were maſters of that part of the empire, but the ſon was much more conſidered than the father, both becauſe he had given the firſt riſe to this revolution, and that he had invited his father to his ſhare in it. The old man grew uneaſy when he ſaw that he was not in all points the maſter, and by an emulation unworthy of a man, he envied his ſon that reſpect which he ſaw was payed him. This went ſo far with him, that he reſolved to drive away his ſon, that ſo he might reign alone; this he thought would be eaſily effected, and that the ſoldiers who had abandoned Severus, would ſtick firmly to him. Upon which he called together an aſſembly of the people, and the ſoldiery, as if he had ſome matter of great conſequence to be communicated to them. He harangued to them long upon the miſeries that lay on the commonwealth, and at laſt he

pointed out to his ſon, and ſaid, he was the cauſe of all thoſe miſeries, and the chief occaſion of all the calamities that lay upon the commonwealth: and thereupon he tore the imperial purple from him. He being thus ſtript of that badge of dignity, leapt down from the bench on which the emperor ſate, and was well received by the ſoldier's, who expreſſed upon this occaſion ſo much anger and fury, that the old man being affrighted at it, fell into great diſorder, and was driven out of Rome almoſt as ignominiouſly as Tarquin the proud had been.

XXVIII. He retired firſt to Gaul, and after that he had ſtayed there for ſome time, he went to the other Maximian, knowing him to be his ſons inveterate enemy: he pretended that he went to concert with him ſome things relating to the ſtate of the commonwealth; but his true deſign was, that he might

under this pretence of reconciliation, ſeek an occaſion to murther him, and ſo poſſeſs himſelf of his ſhare of the empire, ſince he was now thruſt out of his own. Diocles was then with the other Maximian, for he had been ſent for by him, that ſo his preſence might give ſome more authority to his inſtalling of Licinius in Severus's ſtead. So that both the old emperors happened to be preſent on that occaſion: and now there were all at once ſix emperors. But Maximian the elder finding that there was a diſtraction in the councils, and that he could not compaſs his deſigns, fled again for the third time; and withdrew into Gaul, with new projects no leſs wicked than the former had been: for though both Conſtantine and his father Conſtance had married two of his daughters, yet he laid a deſign againſt his life, and in order to his effecting it, he laid aſide his imperial ha-

bit. The Franks were then in arms, ſo that Conſtantine was obliged to march againſt them. But his father in-law perſuaded him, who as yet was in no diſtruſt of him, that it was not neceſſary to carry his whole army with him: and that a ſmall body would be ſufficient for defeating thoſe barbarians; that as he might have the army that was left behind in his own power, ſo Conſtantine having ſo few troops with him, might be infallibly overwhelmed by the Franks. He was eaſily wrought on by his father-in-law, whoſe long experience gave great authority to his advices. So after that ſome days were paſt, and that Maximian believed his ſon-in-law was now engaged among the barbarians, he again aſſumed the purple, brake in upon the public treaſure, and as he was wont to do, he diſtributed a large donative among the ſoldiers, and gave out falſe reports concerning Conſtantine:

but all this was quickly turned upon him: for Conſtantine was ſoon adver-tiſed of all that had paſt, and came back with almoſt incredible diligence, ſo that Maximian had not time enough to ſet-tle himſelf in his new uſurpation, but was ſurpriſed, and was alſo abandoned by the ſoldiery; upon which he fled to Marſeilles, and ſhut himſelf up within it, Conſtantine did quickly inveſt that place; and having demanded a perſonal conference with him from the walls, he neither reproached nor threatned him, but only asked him what he himſelf had done, and what was in Maximian's mind, that had puſhed him on to act ſo indecently as he had done? The other anſwered him very ſcurrilouſly: but thoſe about him ſet open the gates to Conſtantine's ſoldiers: ſo this rebelli-ous emperor and treacherous father-in-law, was now in Conſtantine's power; who ſatisfied himſelf with laying his

crimes before him, and ſo chiding him for them, he ſtript him of his imperial purple; but carried his reſentments no farther; and left him both his life and liberty.

XXIX. But Maximian having loſt both the dignity of an emperor, and the regard that was payed to him as a father-in-law, and not being able to bear this lowneſs of fortune, fell to contrive new plots: and ſuch ill uſe made he of Conſtantine's forgiving him, that he ſet on his daughter Fauſta, ſoliciting her, what with careſſes, and what with entreaties, to contrive her husband's ruin, and promiſed her a better huſband when that ſhould be once done; ſo he beſought her to leave their bedchamber door ſometimes open, ſhe undertook to do all that he begged of her, but revealed all to her husband: thus a train was laid for diſcovering his treaſons, in an undeniable manner; there

was an eunuch put in Conſtantine's place, to ſuffer what was projected againſt him. Maximian roſe in the dead ſilence of the night; and all things ſeemed favourable to him: he ſaw ſome few guards, that were at ſome diſtance from the bed-chamber; he told them, that he was going to give his ſon-in-law an account of a ſtrange dream that he had dreamt. So he went in armed, and having killed the eunuch, and fancying that he had executed his project, he came out boaſting of what he had done. But he was not a little confounded when he ſaw Conſtantine coming towards them with ſome ſoldiers about him. The dead body of the eunuch was drawn out, ſo that he was manifeſtly convicted of the murther: and he was ſo confounded with this diſcovery of his treachery, that he was, as it were ſtruck dead with it, nor had he any ſort of excuſe or defence ready. The choice

of the manner of his death was left to him, and he made choice of hanging. Thus this great emperor, that in the long courſe of twenty years reign, had governed the Roman empire with ſo much glory, was now forced to this moſt ignominious end of his execrable life.

XXX. The judgments of that God, who is the avenger of his truth and of his people, were in the next place no leſs viſible upon the other Maximian, that had been indeed the chief contriver of this perſecution. He was now thinking to celebrate the feſtivals of the twentieth year of his reign, and though he had promiſed that upon that occaſion he would reſtore ſome of thoſe ſevere exactions by which he had ruined ſo many of the provinces; yet now inſtead of performing it, he made uſe of this ſolemnity to lay new taxes upon them. It is not eaſy to ſet forth the ſe-

verity of theſe impoſitions that he raiſed upon this occaſion, chiefly of thoſe which were laid on the corn. There were ſoldiers, or rather hangmen, that waited on all the taxmaſters: and men did not know whither to turn them. The officers came with their unreaſonable demands, and thoſe who had not wherewith to ſatisfy them, were ſubjected to great variety of tortures from which they had no way to ſave themſelves, but by doing that which was impoſſible for them: men were beſet with ſuch numbers of ſoldiers, that they could hardly breath for them: there was little or no ceſſation in the trouble to which they were put all the year round; the very judges and the ſoldiers that attended upon them, fell into many quarrels amongſt themſelves: there was not a barn nor a vineyard that was not ſeverely viſited; nor indeed was there enough left to preſerve men alive. But

though this may ſeem a very intolerable thing thus to ſnatch out of mens mouths that bread which they had earned by their labour, yet all this was ſoftned by the hopes that were given of what the emperor was to do in his twentieth year. It was expected that men ſhould appear in rich cloaths, and bring much gold and ſilver along with them, but it was not poſſible to provide this, except by the ſale of the product of the ground; and when this mad tyrant deſtroyed all that, ſo that all men were ruined in order to the raiſing of that treaſure, which was deſigned to be laid out when the twentieth year ſhould come; yet the emperor lived not long enough for that.

XXXI. When Licinius was declared emperor, Maximin reſented it extremely, and would neither be contented any longer with the title of Ceſar, nor allow Licinius the precedence: upon this

Maximian ſent many meſſengers to him, to induce him to ſubmit to the order that he had ſettled; and to pay the reſpect that was due to Licinius's age, and to his gray hairs. But Maximin ſtood upon his terms, and very boldly ſaid, that he to whom the purple had been firſt given, ought always to be conſidered as the ancienter emperor: and ſo he would neither yield to Maximian's intreaties, nor to his commands. The tyrant was extremely troubled at this, and in his brutal way he complained of Maximin's ingratitude, whom he had raiſed from ſo mean a ſtate to ſo great a dignity; of which the other was now ſo unmindful as to reject all his orders, and his moſt earneſt deſires. But when he ſaw that nothing could prevail on him, he reſolved to put an end to this ſecond rank of dignity, and ſo to extinguiſh the title of Ceſar; therefore as he declared himſelf and Licinius the

emperors, ſo he declared Maxentius and Conſtantine the ſons of the emperors, (by which Maximin was quite ſhut out.) But he not daunted with this, writ to him that upon the laſt occaſion of a great aſſembly that met in the field of Mars, he had been ſaluted emperor by the army. Maximian received this with great regret, but yet upon it he declared all the four emperors.

XXXII. In the eighteenth year of his reign, he was viſited by God with an incurable ſtroke: an ulcer bred in his ſecret parts, which daily grew and ſpread. The phyſicians uſed both inciſions, and other medicines; but though they brought it to a cicatrice, and ſeem'd to have healed it, yet it feſtred, and broke out again, and the humour did ſo corrode the veſſels, that a vein burſt, upon which he loſt ſo much blood, that it had almoſt coſt him his life; for it was very hard to ſtop it. A new cure

was carried on with that ſucceſs, that the wound was again brought to a cicatrice. But upon a little ſhaking of his body, the vein broke again, and he loſt at this ſecond time more blood than he had done at firſt. He became pale, ſunk, and waſted to nothing. So that the low eſtate of his body made that he loſt no more blood. But now his wound became more dangerous, outward applications had no effect any more upon it: the cancer ſpread itſelf ſtill farther, and the more it was cut, it ſeemed to grow ſo much the faſter; all the moſt famous phyſicians that were every where ſearcht for, began to loſe hopes. And while all human means became ineffectual, recourſe was had to their falſe gods, and prayers were made for his recovery to Apollo and Eſculapius. And ſome relief was pretended to have come from Apollo. But he grew ſtill worſe and worſe. His death ſeemed

very near, for the cancer had conſumed all the bottom of his belly; his guts were laid open, and were likewiſe rotting, and his whole breech was overrun with the putrifaction; ſome bold, but unhappy phyſicians would not for all this give over, and though they had no hope of ſucceſs, yet they were ſtill trying new remedies. Thoſe drove the evil inwards, even through his bones to the very marrow, and now worms began to breed within him. The ſmell that came from him was ſo noiſome, that it was felt not only over all the palace, but in the very city likewiſe; and the paſſages of his urine and excrements were now mixed, all the membranes being corroded that ſeparated them. He was eat up by vermine, and the whole maſs of his body turned into an univerſal rottenneſs. With all this, he had moſt intolerable pains, ſo that he often bellowed out, as if it had been

a bull wounded. Some living animals, and others that were boil'd, were applied to the putrified parts, to try if the heat would draw out the vermine: and this indeed opened as it were a vaſt hive of them: yet a ſecond impoſtumation diſcovered yet a much greater ſwarm, ſo that his guts ſeemed to diſſolve all into worms. A hydropſy joined to all his other ills, did ſtrangely diſfigure his body: all his upper parts were exhauſted quite, and dried like a mere skeleton, covered with a dead like skin: but at the ſame time all his lower parts were ſwelled up like bladders, ſo that the ſhape of his feet was ſcarce to be ſeen any more. In all this miſery did he languiſh a full year. His conſcience was at laſt awakned, and he was forced to give praiſe to God: ſo that in the intervals of his pains, he cried often out, that 'he would rebuild the church 'of Nicomedia, and that he would re-

'pair the miſchiefs that he had done:' and being in his laſt agonies, he publiſhed this following edict.

'XXXIII.* Among our other cares, 'for the profit and advantage of the 'commonwealth, one was to reduce all 'people to obſerve the ancient laws, 'and the public diſcipline of the Ro-'mans; and in particular to oblige the 'Chriſtians, who had forſaken the re-'ligion of their fathers, to return to a 'better mind: having obſerved, that 'they, by what reaſons ſoever moved 'to it, had been guilty of the wilful-'neſs, and even madneſs of forſaking 'the ancient inſtitutions of the firſt 'Chriſtians: and that according to their 'different humours and fancies, they 'were framing new laws, by which 'they might govern themſelves, and 'were falling into diviſions, and form-'ing many ſeparated aſſemblies: upon

* Vide Euſeb. Eccleſ. Hiſt. lib. 8. cap. 1.

'this, we gave out our edicts, obliging
'them to return back to their firſt in-
'ſtitutions; which had great effects on
'many; but while great numbers con-
'tinued ſtill firm to their rules, and as
'on the one hand they did not offer
'that worſhip, and that devotion to the
'gods that is due, ſo on the other hand
'they did not adore the God of the
'Chriſtians. We therefore having re-
'gard to all theſe things, and being
'moved by our princely compaſſion
'and our conſtant cuſtom of gentleneſs
'towards all men, have thought fit to
'extend this our grace and pity even
'towards the Chriſtians: and therefore
'we do not only ſuffer them to conti-
'nue in their religion, but ſuffer them
'to hold aſſemblies for their worſhip;
'provided always that they do nothing
'contrary to the eſtabliſhed diſcipline.
'By another ordinance we will ſignify
'our pleaſure to our judges, for their

'direction. In the mean while we ex-
'pect that the Chriſtians, in return to
'this our clemency, ſhall pray to God
'for our health, and for the continu-
'ance of the proſperity of the com-
'monwealth; and ſo they may ſtill
'hope to enjoy our protection in their
'reſpective dwellings.'

XXXIV. This edict was publiſhed at Nicomedia, the laſt of April in Maximian's eighth conſulate, and Maximin's third. Then when the priſon doors were ſet open, were you, my dear Donatus, with the other priſoners ſet at liberty, after you had been for the ſpace of ſix years ſhut up. Yet all this did not turn away the judgments of God from Maximian: his putrefaction went on ſtill, till it had quite waſted his whole ſubſtance; ſo that not many days after the publication of this edict, he breathed out his laſt, having recommended his wife and his ſon to

Licinius, and having put them into his hands. This came to be known in Nicomedia before the end of May, ſo that he did not attain to his twentieth year of empire, which was not to begin before the firſt of March following.

XXXV. As ſoon as ever Maximin had heard the news of his death, he being then in the eaſt, made all the haſte that was poſſible to take into his poſſeſſion all thoſe provinces: and as Licinius lingered, he poſſeſſed himſelf of all to the ſtraits of Thrace: and when he came into Bythinia, he took care to recommend himſelf to the favour of the people, by diſcharging them of the tax that was laid on them. By this means the two emperors were now in ill terms, and almoſt engaged in a war: for they lay with their armies on the oppoſite ſhores. But expedients were found out for the making up of all their differences; and they had an

interview upon the ſea, in which they were not only reconciled, but they entred into an alliance: Maximin went back, reckoning that he was now ſecure, and ſo he governed Syria and Egypt juſt as he had done formerly: and though the Chriſtians were now received under the protection of the government, yet he broke all this, and he ſet on underhand the procuring addreſſes from the ſeveral cities to be made to him, for hindring the Chriſtians to build meeting houſes within their bounds; that he might ſeem to be in ſome ſort forced to do that which he had reſolved on of his own accord. So having granted the demand of thoſe addreſſes, he made the chief of the prieſts in the ſeveral cities out of thoſe who were of the government of the city, which had not been practiſed in any former time, and he ordered them to offer every day ſacrifices to all the gods, and to call in

the aſſiſtance of all the ancient prieſts, for looking after the Chriſtians, that they might neither have publick meeting-houſes, nor aſſemble themſelves in ſecret for their worſhip: and required them that they ſhould ſeize on them where-ever they could find them, and either force them to offer ſacrifice, or deliver them to the magiſtrates. And not contented with this ſubordination that he had ſettled among the prieſts, he ordered one in every province to be over all the prieſts of the province; and as he raiſed them up to this high degree of authority, ſo for adding ſome ſplendour to it, he ordered them to wear that ſort of white habits edged about with gold, which might onely be worn by the chief officers of the court. He was reſolved to put the ſame things in execution againſt the Chriſtians in the other provinces, which he had already done in the eaſt. For that he might

ſeem merciful towards them, he would not ſuffer them to be put to death, but he ordered many other puniſhments againſt them, ſuch as the picking out their eyes, the cutting off their hands or feet, and the cutting off their noſes or their ears.

XXXVI. While he was deſigning all theſe things, he received letters from Conſtantine, which put him in ſuch a fright, that he reſolved to diſſemble for ſometime. Yet whenſoever any Chriſtian was found out, he was drowned ſecretly and in the night; nor did he diſcontinue his cuſtom of offering ſacrifices every day in the palace. He alſo began another cuſtom, of ordering all the meat that was to be ſerved up to his table, to be offered up firſt by the prieſts at ſome altar, and not to be killed by his own cooks; ſo that nothing was preſented to his table, but that which had paſſed through ſome rites

or other of their idolatry; by which means it was that none could eat with him, without being in ſome manner or other polluted with thoſe abominations. In all other things he followed the pattern that his maſter had ſet him: for if there was any thing left by Diocletian's or Maximian's oppreſſions, he took care to raiſe all that ſo exactly, as to be ſure to leave nothing to any that ſhould come after him: ſo that without any ſort of ſhame, he robbed the people of all they had: he ſhut up all mens granaries and ſtore-houſes, and forced them to pay by an advance the taxes of the year to come. So that there not being ſeed to ſow the ground, this brought on a moſt intolerable famine. Whole droves of cattle and ſheep were brought for his daily ſacrifices, with which he fed his domeſtics and his ſoldiers ſo copiouſly, that they came to deſpiſe the corn, that was brought

them for their proviſion, ſo that without any care they threw it often out of doors. And as he had a vaſt army, ſo he cloathed his guards very richly, and furniſhed them with much gold, and the commoneſt and raweſt of his ſoldiers had ſilver in abundance given them. He was alſo extreme liberal to the barbarians. All the praiſe that is due to him is, that he was like thoſe merciful robbers, who are contented to ſtrip men without killing them; for if he did not put people to death, that ſo he might ſeize on their eſtates, yet upon every occaſion he either took away all they had, or gave it to ſuch as begged it of him.

XXXVII. But there was one monſtrous wickedneſs, that exceeded all the reſt, which he carried to ſuch a blind and brutal degree, that one cannot find words equal to it, for the indignation which this muſt give, carries one's

thoughts farther than his tongue will ſerve him, to ſet it forth as it ought to be.

His eunuchs, and the other inſtruments of his appetites, ſearcht in all places, and whereſoever they found a beautiful woman, ſhe was dragged away without any regard had of her husband or her parents: thoſe whom he employed in this ſervice, ſtript both married women and maids, and ſo viewed them naked, and if any refuſed to ſubmit to this, ſhe was drowned as guilty of high treaſon. Several married men, whoſe wives were thus violently taken from them, not being able to bear the grief which this gave them, murthered themſelves: and under this monſter, there was no other ſecurity for modeſty, but uglineſs. At laſt he carried this licentiouſneſs to ſuch a pitch, that no body was ſuffered to marry without his leave, and without his taking all liberties with

the bride, before the bridegroom was admitted. He took the daughters of the men of quality, and after he himſelf had corrupted them, he gave them to his ſlaves to marry them. His courtiers were eaſily induced to follow his wicked example, and to defile the beds of ſuch as depended on them: for they ſaw that no body durſt puniſh it Thoſe who were of ordinary rank, were raviſhed by every body at his pleaſure; and ſuch as were of the chief rank, and ſo could not be raviſhed, were begged of the emperor as boons, and when he ſigned any ſuch grant, the father durſt not refuſe it, but ſaw that he muſt either die, or accept of ſome barbarian for his ſon-in-law. For he had ſcarce any other domeſticks or guards, but ſuch as had been driven out of their countries by the Goths in the twentieth year of Diocletian's reign, during that feſtivity. All theſe came and delivered themſelves

up to Maximian, and ſo he made uſe of thoſe who had fled from being enſlaved by the Goths, as his inſtruments for enſlaving the Romans. Maximin being environed with ſuch guards, and depending ſo entirely upon them as he did, treated all the reſt of the eaſt with the utmoſt degree of contempt.

XXXVIII. He made this the meaſure of his appetites, 'to eſteem every 'thing lawful to which his deſires car-'ried him;' And according to this rule, though he had acknowledged the empreſs Valeria, that was Maximian's widow, his adopted mother, yet that did not ſecure her; ſhe had come to live in his court, reckoning that ſhe would be ſafer there than in any other place, ſince he had a wife of his own. But nothing was ſacred to him, when he was puſhed on by his impure appetites; ſhe was yet in deep mourning, the year not being out, when he propoſed marriage to her,

offering to divorce his wife, if ſhe would accept of him. Her anſwer was ſuch as could have been expected from her; that ſhe could not treat of her marriage, while ſhe was yet in her mournings, and while the aſhes of her husband, his adopted father, were not yet quite cold. She added, that it was a ſtrange piece of impiety in him, to offer to put away his wife, who had been always faithful to him: which let her ſee what ſhe herſelf might look for from him; and in the laſt place it ſeemed to her no ſmall crime, as it was a thing without an example, for a woman of her rank to think of a ſecond husband. All this was reported to Maximin in her name: but he was ſo enraged at it, that his brutal deſires were now changed into wrath and fury. He preſently put her under a proſcription, he ſeized on her goods, he took her ſervants from her, and tortured ſome of her eunuchs to death;

and ſent her and her mother into baniſhment; but not to any certain place: but ordered her to be hurried about from place to place: and he charged ſuch women as were deareſt to her, with adultery, and upon that forged pretence he condemned them.

XXXIX. There was an ancient woman of quality, whom Valeria had always conſidered as a mother, and Maximin believed that the refuſal that was made of him, was adviſed by her; ſo he ordered Eratineus the preſident to put her to an infamous death; with her he ordered two other women of the ſame quality to be likewiſe executed. The one was mother to one of the veſtal virgins of Rome, the other was the widow of a ſenatour and was the empreſſes kinſwoman: but both their crime was, that as they were beautiful, ſo they were no leſs modeſt. They were violently ſeiſed on, not as if they had

been to be carried before a court of juſtice, but as if they had fallen into the hands of robbers, yet there was no accuſer to lay any thing to their charge. But a Jew was found out, who being condemned for ſome other crimes, hoped to obtain his pardon by becoming a falſe witneſs againſt them. The judge who condemned them upon this evidence, carried them out of town to their execution with a guard; for he was affraid that he ſhould have been ſtoned by the people. This tragedy was acted at Nice. The Jew being put to the torture, was forced to accuſe the women as he had been inſtructed: and when they offered to ſay any thing for themſelves, they were beaten by the tormentors; ſo that notwithſtanding their innocence, they were condemned. There was a great lamentation raiſed upon this, not onely by the husband of one of them, to whom his wife was ex-

treme dear, but by all the multitude, that ſo unuſual a ſpectacle had brought together: and ſo apprehenſive were the judges of the peoples uſing force for reſcuing thoſe perſons out of their hands, that there was drawn about them a body of archers, and others of the lightly armed ſoldiers: and with this guard were they led out to execution. Nor was there any care taken of their burial, for their ſervants were forced to abandon them; yet ſome of their friends, moved with compaſſion, came ſecretly and buried them. The adulterous Jew had not the pardon that was promiſed him, ſo ſeeing that he was to be hanged, he diſcovered all this myſtery, and with his laſt breath he declared to all that were looking on, that the women had ſuffered unjuſtly.

XL. The empreſs being now baniſhed to the deſarts of Syria found a ſecret way of acquainting her father Dio-

cletian with her condition. He upon that ſent to Maximin, and deſired that his daughter might be ſent to him; but though he repeated this over and over again, all was without effect; ſo after all, he ſent a kinſman of his own, that was an officer of the army, in a high poſt, and in great credit, to whom he gave in charge, to put Maximin in mind of the obligations that he had received from him: but this interceſſion was as ineffectual as the others had formerly been.

XLI. At this time Conſtantine gave order that the ſtatues of Maximian the elder, ſhould be every where pulled down; and that ſuch pictures or figures of him, as had been any where ſet up, ſhould be removed. Now Diocletian's ſtatues and his being always coupled together, the diſgrace of the one drew the others likewiſe after it. Diocletian ſeeing this affront put on his ſtatues,

which no emperor before him had ever ſeen done in his own time, and being now over-charged with this redoubling of grief, he reſolved to put an end to his life. He was in a perpetual uneaſineſs, and could neither eat nor ſleep. He was heard to ſigh and groan continually, and was ſeen oft to weep, and to be tumbling ſometimes on his bed, and ſometimes on the ground. Thus he that had reigned over the Roman empire for twenty years, was now ſo caſt down and mortified, that he died partly of hunger, and partly through anguiſh of ſpirit.

XLII. There was only one of the enemies of God now left alive, namely Maximin, whoſe fall and death comes to be related in the next place. He bare a great envy to Licinius ever ſince he had been preferred by Maximian to himſelf; and though he had lately entred into an alliance with him, yet

when he heard that Licinius was engaging himſelf into a ſtraiter alliance with Conſtantine, and was going to marry his ſiſter, he concluded that this union of thoſe two emperors, muſt certainly be faral to himſelf; ſo he ſent ſecretly to Rome, and writ very kindly to Maxentius, deſiring his alliance and friendſhip, which Maxentius embraced very readily, as if it had been ſomewhat ſent him from heaven; for he had declared war againſt Conſtantine, upon the pretence of revenging his father's blood. From this ſome have imagined, that the father had only pretended to fall out with his ſon, that he might have the more credit with the other emperors; and by that means find an occaſion of deſtroying them all; that ſo he and his ſon might have the whole empire between them: but this is a miſtake; for it is certain that Maximian the elder had a mind to deſtroy his ſon with

the reſt, and that when this was done, he intended that Diocletian and he ſhould again re-aſſume the empire.

XLIII. Now the war was begun between Maxentius and Conſtantine, which Maxentius managed by his generals, but would not ſtir out of Rome himſelf; having had a reſponſe, that whenſoever he went out of the gates of Rome, he ſhould periſh. He had much the better army: for he had not only thoſe troops that had abandoned Severus, but likewiſe others that he had brought together out of Mauritania and Italy. The two armies fought, and Maxentius's had the better; yet Conſtantine did not for that loſe heart, but having reſolved to put all to hazard, he marched on to the gates of Rome, and poſted his army at the other ſide of the Milvian bridge: the twenty ſeventh of October was now near, which was the anniverſary of Maxentius's

coming to the empire: and now his fifth year was almoſt out. Conſtantine was warned in a dream to put the divine mark, the ſign of the croſs, upon the ſhields of his ſoldiers, and ſo to give battle; he took care to execute this, and ordered the letter X with the letters of the name of Chriſt mixed in a Monogramme, to be drawn on all their ſhields; and having made this his diſtinction, he drew out his army. The enemy's forces came likewiſe out; and croſſed the bridge, but Maxentius himſelf came not with them; they drew up both in the ſame manner, and both ſides fought with great courage, neither of them giving ground to the other; in the mean while there was a ſedition raiſed in Rome, and an out cry was made againſt Maxentius, as if he had taken more care of himſelf than of the public; and while he was entertaining the people with the ſpectacles of the Hip-

podrome, there was an univerſal cry raiſed that Conſtantine could not be withſtood; this put him into a great diſorder, ſo he made the Sybilline books to be ſearcht, in which it was found, that the enemy of the Romans was to periſh that day. This gave him ſuch aſſured hopes of victory that he marched out in perſon to his army: as ſoon as he had paſſed the bridge, it was broke behind him. Upon this the battle was renewed and the hand of God appeared over the armies. Maxentius was beat, and when he thought to repaſs the bridge, he found it broke, and was carried by the croud of his men, that were flying, into the Tiber, and ſo was drowned there. An end being thus put to the war, Conſtantine was declared emperor, with great expreſſion of joy, both by the ſenate and people of Rome. Among Maxentius's papers he found Maximin's letters, by which he diſco-

vered his treacherous deſigns againſt himſelf: he alſo ſaw the imperial ſtatues that he had ſent to Maxentius. The ſenate did Conſtantine the honour to order his name to be put firſt in order, before the other emperors, tho' that was claimed by Maximin, who was as much ſtruck with the news that was brought to him of Rome's being thus freed from tyranny, as if it had been a defeat given himſelf; and as ſoon as he heard of the ſenates decree, giving Conſtantine the precedence, he treated Conſtantine in a moſt reproachful and inſolent manner.

XLIV. Conſtantine having ſettled matters at Rome, went during the winter to Milan: and thither did Licinius come to marry his ſiſter. Maximin hearing that they were now amuſed with the ſolemnities of this wedding, march with his army out of Syria, during the bitter cold of the winter; and

having harraſſed his army with great marches, he got to Bythinia: for the ſeaſon was very ſevere, and both by ſnow and rains the ways were very deep; and what with cold and what with hard labour, he loſt all his horſe, ſo that all along where he had marched, he might have been traced by them; which was but an ill omen to his men: nor did he ſtop within his own limits, but having croſt the ſtraits of Thrace, he came with his army to the gates of Byſance. There was a garriſon put within that place by Licinius for all events; ſo he ſtudied firſt to corrupt the ſoldiers by preſents and promiſes: and then to terrify them by threatning them with a ſiege; but both the one and the other proved equally ineffectual, they had eleven days aſſigned them, for advertiſing the emperor, and having no return from him, they being diſheartned by the ſmallneſs of their

numbers, rendred themſelves. From thence he advanced to Heraclea; and being ſtopt there in the ſame manner as at Byſance, he loſt ſome days there likewiſe. But by this time Licinius having marcht as quick as was poſſible, had got to Adrianople with a few men about him; in the mean while Maximin having likewiſe taken Perinthus, which gave him a new ſtop, he advanced eighteen miles beyond it, where he poſted himſelf; he could go no further; for Licinius had poſſeſſed himſelf of the poſt that lay next to that, which was likewiſe eighteen miles diſtant from it; and having drawn together as great a body as he could on the ſudden, he marched on towards Maximin, on deſign rather to hinder his progreſs, than to enter into action; for as he did not intend to fight, ſo he had no proſpect of victory; for he had not above thirty thouſand men: whereas Maximin was

at the head of an army of ſeventy thouſand: for Licinius's army was ſcattered over a great many provinces, and he could not bring all his troops together in ſo ſhort a time.

XLV. While the two armies were thus ſo near one another, that it was expected that the matter ſhould come to a ſpeedy deciſion, Maximin made a vow to Jupiter, that if he got the victory, he would utterly extinguiſh the very name of a Chriſtian. The next night an angel appeared to Licinius in his ſleep, and ordered him to riſe immediately, and join with his whole army in calling on the great God, and promiſed him an aſſured victory in caſe he ſhould do this, Licinius dreamt, that after this he roſe, and that the angel dictated to him the very words in which he ſhould offer up his prayers. And as ſoon as he was awake, he called for one of his ſecretaries, and ordered

him to write down the words, which were theſe, 'We pray to thee, O great 'God; we pray to thee, O holy God; 'we commit the juſtice of our cauſe to 'thee; we commit our lives to thee; 'we commit this our empire to thee. 'It is by thee that we do live; our 'conqueſts and our happineſs come 'from thee: O thou great and good 'God, hear our prayers; we ſtretch 'out our hands to thee: hear us there-'fore thou holy and great God.' Many copies were quickly made of this prayer, which were ſent about to all the officers, and all were required to make their ſoldiers get it by heart. This raiſed the courage of the whole army, who now lookt on the victory as aſſured, ſince it was ſo divinely foretold. Maximin reſolved to give battle on the firſt of May, which was the anniverſary of his coming to the empire, this being now the eighth year com-

plete ſince he was raiſed to that dignity: and thus it happened, that as Maxentius was defeated at Rome on his anniverſary, ſo Maximin run the ſame fortune on his; only Maximin would needs anticipate his own ruin; for he would needs fight the day before it, that ſo he might celebrate his anniverſary with the more pomp, when he had defeated his enemy. When Licinius heard that Maximin's army was advancing, he likewiſe drew out his, ſo that they were in view of one another. There lay between them a great and barren plain, called Serenum. Licinius's men laid down their ſhields, and took off their head-pieces, and with hands lifted up to heaven, they ſaid their prayer, the Emperor himſelf beginning, and the officers and ſoldiers following him in it; which was pronounced ſo loud, that the other army that was to fall before them, heard the noiſe of it. The

prayer was three times repeated, and that being done, the ſoldiers being now wonderfully animated, put on their head-pieces, and took up their ſhields. The Emperors themſelves parlied a little; Maximin would hearken to no propoſitions of peace; for he deſpiſed Licinius, and fancied that all his ſoldiers would have deſerted him, becauſe he was more ſparing in his bounty to them; whereas Maximin was extreamly profuſe; and as he had begun with Licinius, not doubting but that his army would without giving any ſtroke come over to him, ſo when he had thus doubled his forces, he reſolved to go againſt Conſtantine.

XLVI. The two armies drew at laſt ſo near one another, that the ſignals were given, and the enſigns on both ſides advanced; Licinius's men gave the charge with great vigour; but the others were ſo diſordered and terrified,

that they could neither draw their ſwords nor throw their darts: Maximin run about on all hands, perſwading Licinius's men to turn over to him, what with preſents, what by intreaties; but all was to no effect; and being charged in perſon, he was forced to retire. His army fell before the enemy without being able to make any reſiſtance; and that vaſt body of men was mowed down by a handful. They ſeemed to have forgot their rank, their courage, and their former exploits; and the hand of God was viſible in delivering them over to have their throats cut by their enemies, as if they had come into the field for an execution, and not for a battle. When Maximin ſaw that the matter went far otherwiſe than he had lookt for, and that great numbers of his men were killed, he threw away his purple, and put on the habit of a ſlave, and ſo croſſed the ſtraits; for now the one half

of his army was deſtroyed, and the other half either fled or rendered itſelf. And ſince the Emperor had deſerted his army, the ſoldiers were not at all aſhamed of deſerting his intereſts: he made great haſte; for in a night and a Day he fled to Nicomedia; and got thither the firſt of May in the night, which was an hundred and threeſcore miles diſtant from the place where the battle was fought: he ſtayed not long there, but having taken along with him his ſons and his wife, and ſome few of his domeſtics, he went to the eaſt; yet he ſtopped in Cappadocia, and there he took the purple again, having gathered together ſome ſoldiers partly of his own ſtragglers, and partly of ſome troops that came to him from the eaſt.

XLVII. Licinius after he had diſtributed a part of his army into quarters, croſſed the ſtraits, and went over to Bithinia with the reſt. When he en-

tred into Nicomedia, he offered up his thankſgivings to God, by whoſe aid he had obtained the victory: and on the thirteenth of June, Conſtantine and he being now in their third conſulate, the following edict was ſent to the preſident.

'Whereas both I Conſtantine the 'Emperor, and I Licinius the Emperor, 'had a very ſucceſsful congreſs at Mi-'lan, in which we treated of all things 'that related to the profit and ſafety of 'the public; among other matters we 'thought that nothing could be of 'greater advantage to our people, or 'concern ourſelves more, than the ſet-'tling of thoſe matters, in which the 'worſhip of the Deity conſiſted; and 'therefore we judged it meet to allow 'to all Chriſtians and others, free liber-'ty to follow that religion which they 'ſhould like beſt: that by this means 'that ſupream Deity, which dwells on

'high, might be gracious and favour-
'able to us, and to all our ſubjects:
'therefore upon due deliberation and
'weighty reaſons, we have thought fit,
'that no man may be denied the liberty
'of profeſſing either the Chriſtian re-
'ligion, or any other, as he ſhall judge
'it beſt; that ſo the great God, whom
'we worſhip with free minds, may in
'all things bleſs us with his gracious
'favour and protection. Therefore we
'will have you to know, that we have
'thought fit to annul all thoſe reſtric-
'tions, that might ſeem to be in our
'former edict addreſſed to you, relating
'to the Chriſtians: and we do now or-
'dain, that every one that is diſpoſed
'to adhere to that religion, ſhall be
'ſuffered to continue in it with all free-
'dom, and without any diſquiet or mo-
'leſtation: and we have explained this
'the more copiouſly to you, that ſo
'you might underſtand that we have

'given a free and abſolute liberty to
'the ſaid Chriſtians to profeſs their re-
'ligion. And ſince we have allowed
'this liberty to them, you will likewiſe
'underſtand, that we allow the like free
'and full liberty to all thoſe who pro-
'feſs any other religion; that ſo ac-
'cording to the quiet to which we have
'brought the empire, every man may
'enjoy the free exerciſe of that religi-
'on of which he ſhall make choice; for
'we will do nothing by which any man
'may ſuffer any prejudice either in his
'honour, or upon the account of his
'religion. With relation to the Chriſ-
'tians, we have thought it fit likewiſe
'to add this particular; that the places
'in which they uſed to hold their aſ-
'ſemblies, and concerning which there
'were ſome rules ſet in a former edict
'addreſt to you, that have been pur-
'chaſed either from our exchequer, or
'from ſome particular perſons, ſhall be

'reſtored to them, without any excuſes
'or delays; and without either asking
'or taking of any money from them
'upon that account. We order likewiſe
'reſtitution to be made by all that have
'obtained grants of them; and that all
'ſuch as may have either purchaſed
'them, or obtained grants of them,
'ſhall in order to their being repaired
'by us for their loſs, go to ſome ma-
'giſtrate, that ſo we, according to our
'clemency, may relieve them. In the
'mean while, we order you to take care,
'that without any further delay, reſti-
'tution be made to the Chriſtians. And
'whereas the Chriſtians, had beſides
'thoſe places in which they uſed to
'hold their aſſemblies, others likewiſe
'that belonged to them as a body cor-
'porate; that is to ſay, to their churches
'in common, and not to any particular
'perſons among them; we comprehend
'all theſe under the ſame law; and or-

'der them alſo to be reſtored to the
'corporations or aſſemblies of the Chri-
'ſtians, and that without any fraud
'or diſpute, upon the for-mentioned
'terms; that thoſe who reſtore them
'freely, may hope to be recompenſed
'by us according to our bounty. In all
'which matters you are required to
'give your moſt effectual aſſiſtance to
'the bodies corporate of the Chriſtians,
'that ſo our pleaſure may be the more
'ſpeedily executed; and by which we
'ſhall the more effectually ſecure the
'public peace. And we will be hereby
'aſſured, that the divine favour, of
'which we have had hitherto ſuch
'proofs, ſhall always watch over us,
'and that we ourſelves ſhall be always
'ſucceſsful, as well as the public hap-
'py. And that the tenor of this our
'gracious edict may be univerſally
'known, we order you to affix atteſted

'copies of it in all places; that ſo no 'man may pretend ignorance.'

When the edict was publiſhed, Licinius did likewiſe by word of mouth entreat all perſons, to ſee the meeting-houſes of the Chriſtians reſtored again to them: and thus from the firſt beginning of the perſecution, and from the deſtruction of the church of Nicomedia, to the rebuilding of it, there were ten years and about four months.

XLVIII. But while Licinius was purſuing after Maximin, he ſtill fled before him, and poſſeſſed himſelf of the narrow paſſages of mount Taurus, where he built forts to ſtop them up, that ſo it might not be poſſible for Licinius to paſs them; but he took a compaſs to the right hand: and when Maximin ſaw that there was now nothing to ſtop him, he fled to Tarſus; but being like to be ſhut up there, both by ſea and land, and ſeeing no poſſibility

of eſcape, the anguiſh of his ſpirit and his fear, made him fly to death, as the only way to eſcape from thoſe evils with which God was purſuing him. He firſt eat and drunk to a great exceſs, as is ordinary for thoſe to do who reckon that it is their laſt meal that they eat, and then he took poiſon; but his ſtomach being ſo over-charged, made that the poiſon had not a preſent operation on him, but inſtead of killing him out-right, it threw him into a lingering torment, not unlike the plague; by which his life was ſo far lengthened out to him, that he felt his miſery long: the poiſon began now to work violently on him, it burned his vitals ſo much, that his inſufferable pains threw him into a phrenſy; ſo that for four days time he eat earth, which he dug up with his hands, and ſwallowed it up very greedily. The rages of his pain were ſo intolerable, that he run his head a-

gainſt a wall with ſuch force, that his eyes ſtarted out of the eye-holes; but as he loſt the ſight of his eyes, a viſion repreſented himſelf to his imagination, as ſtanding to be judged by God, who ſeemed to have hoſts of miniſters about him all in white garments; at this ſight he cried out as if he had been put to the torture, and ſaid, that it was others, and not he, that were to blame; yet afterwards he confeſſed his own guilt, being as it were forced to it by the torments that he ſuffered: he called upon Jeſus Chriſt, and with many tears he begged that he would have pity on him; he roared and groaned as if he had been inwardly burnt up: and thus did he breath out his defiled ſoul, in the moſt dreadful manner that can be imagined.

XLIX. Thus did God deſtroy all the perſecutors of his great name, both root and branch: for Licinius being now

ſettled in the empire, gave order to put both Valeria and Caudidian to death. Valeria had been ſtill preſerved by Maximin, who notwithſtanding all his rage againſt her, and though he ſaw now his own end approaching, yet had not the boldneſs to put her to death. Caudidian was her adopted ſon, for his mother was a concubine of Maximian's; but Valeria being barren, had adopted him. She had no ſooner got the news of Maximin's death, than ſhe came to his court in diſguiſe, that ſhe might ſee what would become of Caudidian; but he appearing publickly in Nicomedia, and fancying that reſpect would be ſhewed him becauſe of his birth, and apprehending nothing leſs than what befel him, was put to death: upon which Valeria fled away immediately. Licinius ordered likewiſe Severian to be put to death. He was Severus's ſon, and was now grown up to a man's age,

and had accompanied Maximin in his flight; but it was pretended, that he was aſpiring to the empire, and for that he was condemned. All theſe had great apprehenſions of Licinius, looking on him as an ill man; only Valeria, who had refuſed to reſign her pretenſions to Maximin, had reſolved to do it in his favour. Licinius ordered likewiſe Maximin's eldeſt ſon, who was then eight years old, and his daughter that was only ſeven, and had been contracted to Caudidian, to be put to death. And before that was executed, their mother was drowned in the river Orontes, where ſhe had made many chaſt women to be drowned formerly. And thus thro' the juſt and righteous judgment of God, all thoſe wicked perſons came to ſuffer the ſame things that they had done to others.

L. Valeria herſelf wandred about in the habit of a peaſant, during the ſpace

of eighteen months; but was at laſt diſcovered at Theſſalonica, where both ſhe and her mother ſuffered. The two empreſſes were led to the place of execution, through a vaſt multitude of ſpectators, who were ſtruck with the compaſſion that was raiſed by ſo lamentable a ſight: their heads were cut off, and their bodies were caſt into the ſea, ſo fatal did their dignity and Valeria's chaſtity prove to them.

LI. I have given you this recital upon the credit of perſons that were well informed of thoſe matters: and I have thought fit to write them juſt as they were tranſacted, that ſo the true account of thoſe great revolutions might not be loſt; and that it might not be in the power of any, who intended to write the hiſtory of that time, to corrupt the truth, or to ſuppreſs either their ſins againſt God, or God's judgments upon them.

It is to his infinite mercy that we owe our thanksgivings; who has at laſt viſited the world, and has gathered together and recovered his flock, that was partly ſcattered abroad, and partly torn by ravenous wolves; and who has deſtroyed thoſe beaſts of prey, that had waſted the paſtures of his flock, and had broken their folds. Where are now thoſe once glorious and renowned names of Jovins and Herculins, that were aſſumed with ſo much inſolence by Diocletian and Maximian, and that were afterwards derived by them to their ſucceſſors! God has blotted them out, and razed them out of the world.

Let us then celebrate God's triumph over his enemies with all the elevations of joy: let us ſing of his victories, and praiſe him for them; and let us beg of him by our moſt earneſt prayers, repeated day and night, that he will for ever eſtabliſh that peace which he has

given to his people after ten years of war.

And you in particular, my moſt dear Donatus, who deſerves that God ſhould hear your prayers, intercede earneſtly with him, that he may always ſhew mercy to his ſervants; that he may be gracious and favourable to them; that he may protect his people from all the ſnares and aſſaults of the devil; and that the preſent flouriſhing eſtate of his church may be always preſerved ſafe and undiſturbed.

FINIS.